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Sam'l W. Fisher

1850

SERMONS

ON THE

LIFE OF CHRIST.

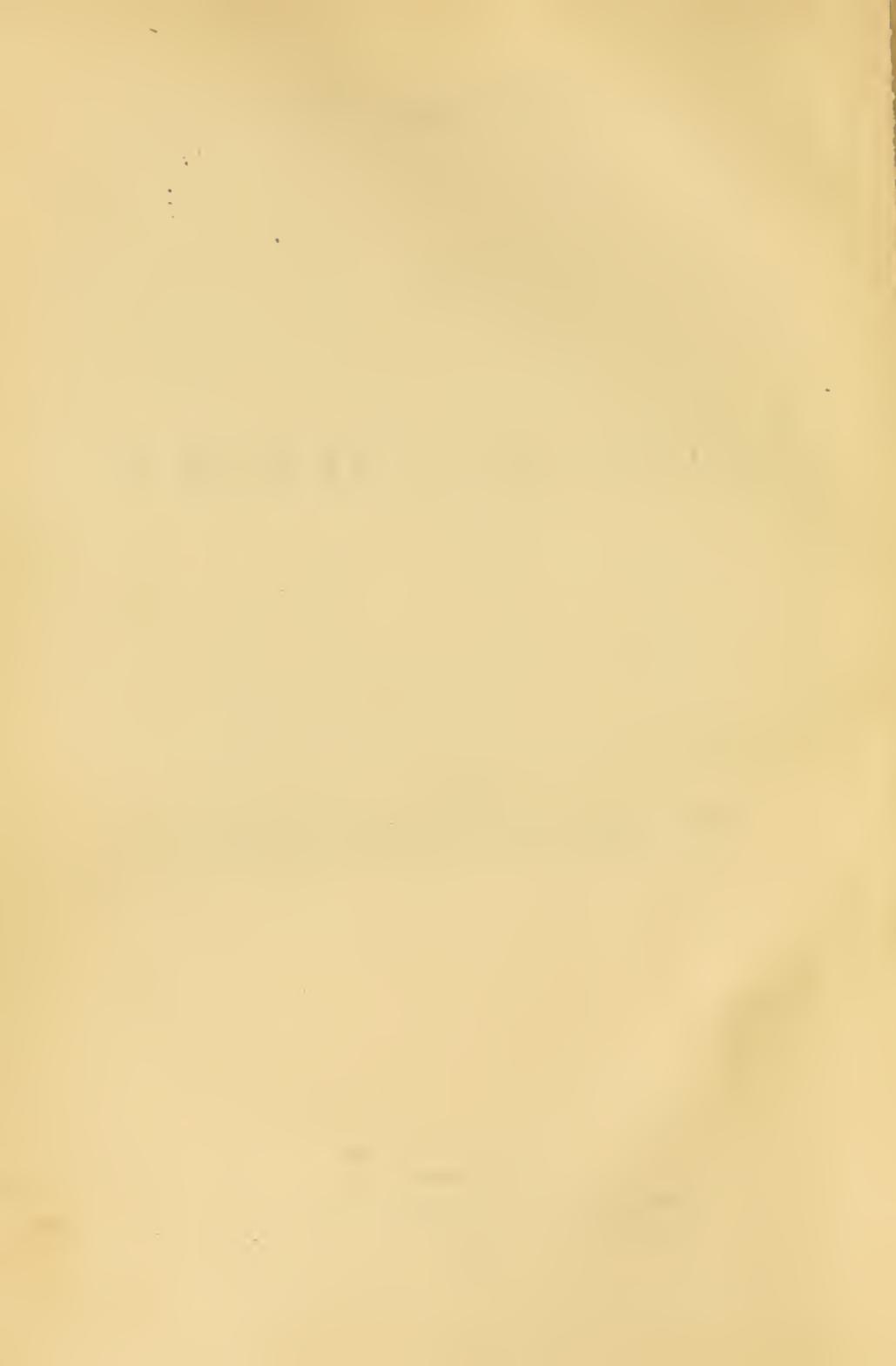
BY

REV. SAMUEL W. FISHER, D.D., LL.D.

CINCINNATI:

ROBERT CLARKE & CO.

1877.





This volume, published by request, is dedicated to the friends and parishioners of the late Rev. SAMUEL W. FISHER, D.D. The sermons it contained are a selected portion of a course written and delivered while resident in Utica. The final sermon of this course closed his ministry. As these discourses could not have the benefit of his own careful revision, it is hoped that whatever is crude or unfinished will be received with indulgence.

CINCINNATI, *May* 5, 1877.

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## SERMONS ON THE LIFE OF CHRIST.

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### I.

THE PREPARATIONS FOR THE COMING OF CHRIST—THE  
FULLNESS OF TIME.

*“But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son.”—Galatians, iv, 4.*

It has often been questioned why the incarnation took place just when it did; why was not the Cross planted in Eden after the fall? or before the flood? or in the time of Abraham or Moses? Now we are perfectly sure that for all the divine acts there are good and sufficient reasons—reasons which, when once they are fairly apprehended, will vindicate the wisdom of God. There must be reasons for the time of the incarnation, all-sufficient to warrant it. The text simply declares that, when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son. The direct inference from this statement is that there was a process of preparation going on from the time of the fall for this event. A series of events was occurring, each occupying a portion of time, until at length the series was completed; the measure of time needful was filled up; the conditions essential to the preparation for the event were all met; then, in this fullness of the time, the incarnation took place.

Now we know that, in reference to other great events,

God made large preparations. The creation of man was a most marked event. But for this God made the most elaborate preparations. He first created the elements of the world ; and then he put these elements through a protracted process of development and organization ; sometimes arresting the process by a divine act ; sometimes producing new organizations ; then mingling all together again, in seeming chaos ; and thus he ribbed the world with granite and trap ; compacted the limestone out of organic remains ; bedded the coal a little way below the surface of the earth ; injected the gold and silver and iron into the veins of rock ; and when this vast work was accomplished, then he gave the earth its present form, and covered it with grass and trees, and placed upon it the animal life that now roams over it ; and then, as the final and crowning act, he created man himself. All this elaborate and miraculous preparation he made for the creation of man.

But the incarnation is a grander event than the creation ; and for this, therefore, his preparations extend down through four thousand years, until the fullness of the time had come, when he sent forth his Son. The Scriptures, indeed, do not specify in what these preparations consist. But they have left us free to gather from the history of the world what in all probability were some of the reasons for thus delaying the incarnation. We can not, indeed, exhaust the subject ; we may be mistaken in some things ; we may not here reach the fundamental and most urgent reason which exists in the divine mind for this act ; but we may, by looking at the world in its history, reach some conclusions which to us seem conclusive and sufficient. Jesus rebuked the learned men of his day

for their blindness to the signs of the times which were to inaugurate the coming of the Messiah, and thereby warranted the inference that the providence and word of God sufficiently indicated that the fullness of the time had come. Let us, then, in the spirit of sincere inquirers, see if we can not discern some of these processes of preparation by which the world was to be prepared for the coming of Christ.

Here, at the outset, we state a principle fundamental to the right understanding of the text—the principle that God rules among all nations, and has done so from the beginning, permitting, controlling, or directing in all the affairs of men; that in all this he has had a direct and primary reference to the incarnation of Jesus. The opposers of Christianity do not deny that his life constituted a great era in the world's history. One of the most popular, if not the most acute of these, says "that all history is incomprehensible without him." But we differ from them totally in regard to the sense in which this is true. They hold that Christ is only one of the most remarkable elements in the development of humanity—a single factor in the account of human progress, himself part of the development of the race, and contributing largely to its future. We hold to no such theory of development. We hold that God permitted humanity to unfold itself under various influences in order to show the absolute necessity of the incarnation for the salvation of man and vindicate His wisdom in the great plan of redemption. We believe that all the lines of history thus converge on Christ, and that from him history before and since his coming receives its character and its solution; that if you put

Christ aside as a supernatural creation on whom, as on a pivot, the divine administration over the race centers, history is a chaos, without light, without order, without any intelligible end. On this subject I propose to dwell more fully in a subsequent discourse, when I come to bring the theory of natural development under review. And I state it now merely to indicate the position of Christianity as recognizing the whole history of the world previous to Christ as designed to refer to his coming.

(I simply state here, without stopping to justify it, that I mainly regard the end of creation to be the harmonious unfolding of the divine attributes in the government of free, intelligent beings, thus revealing the highest wisdom of God, "That even unto principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God.")

In addressing you on this subject I shall follow in the main two lines of thought. 1. It was the purpose of God in the history of the world to demonstrate the absolute necessity of the incarnation in order to the elevation and salvation of man. The necessity for the sacrifice on the cross in order that God might be just while He justified the believer, existed in the very nature of the divine government; but the feeling of this necessity so far as man was concerned, in order to his personal elevation and salvation, could not have been so plainly demonstrated by the appearance of Christ immediately after the fall. Hence God suffered the world to pass through all sorts of experiments and try all kinds of methods to purify and save itself. And not until these were exhausted, and the race was plunged into utter ruin, did Jesus appear.

(1.) Christianity assumes that God originally made a revelation of Himself to man. He gave him as his heritage the great primary truths of religion. He taught him at the first His pure law. He assured him of pardon through a bloody sacrifice if he would only believe and obey. He instituted sacrifices to hold up this idea before his mind. Now what was the result? Did he preserve the truth? Did he live up to it? Did he rise to and maintain the position to any great extent of a firm believer in it? To ask the question is to answer it. History answers it with wonderful emphasis. The men who mocked Noah when he was building the ark answer it. The gods, the goddesses—30,000 of them in Greece alone—answer it. The impure rites, the damnable untruths and misrepresentations of the Infinite answer it. "Look," says John Howe, "upon the fragments of that curious sculpture which once adorned the palace of that great king; the relics of common nations; the living prints of some undefaced truth; the fair ideas of things; the yet legible precepts that relate to practice. Behold with what accuracy the broken pieces show them to have been engraven by the finger of God, and how they now lie torn and scattered, one in this dark corner, another in that, buried in heaps of dirt and rubbish. There is not now a system, an entire table of coherent truths to be found, or a frame of holiness, but some shivered parcels. And if any, with great toil and labor, apply themselves to draw out here one piece and there another, and set them together, they serve rather to show how requisite the divine workmanship was in the original composition, than for present use to the excellent purpose for which the

whole was first designed." So low had the world descended, that even Pilate, an intelligent Roman, could sneeringly ask Jesus, "What is truth?" as if truth were an imagination, a nonentity, which none could possess or demonstrate. This experiment had been tried. The original revelation of God without a living Christ had failed. Broken up into fragments, overloaded with false human conceits, defiled with monstrous impurities, it ministered only an infinitesimal truth to the prodigious structures of error. And the living truth must become incarnate in order to save the soul.

This fact is of itself enough to establish the necessity of the incarnation with the most thoughtful. Yet with many it has always been a cherished theory that there were other forces that could be made to supplement or take the place of this primitive religious truth. It was necessary, therefore, in order to a full demonstration of the incapacity of man to purify and save his soul without a living Redeemer, that these forces should have a fair trial.

(2.) It has been supposed that civil organizations might, in some way, assist men to become truly religious and prepare them for the life to come. This experiment, therefore, must be tried. It has been tried on a large scale, in various forms, extending through many centuries. Governments of all kinds, pure democracies, republics, oligarchies, limited and unlimited monarchies, have all tried their hand at the religious and moral elevation of the people. The very principles on which our own government is founded, and which we sometimes assume to be wholly original, have been known and substantially acted upon in the

past. Now you are to bear in mind that all these governments have uniformly aimed to be the conservators of religion, to train the people in religious ideas. The idea of Church and State is not modern. It is as old as the government of the patriarchs. There was not a government in existence, before the coming of Christ, that did not deem it a matter of obligation for it to maintain religious worship and educate the people in religious truth. What was the result? So long as the primitive faith remained in force, these governments grew strong and powerful. But in the very process of development, the truth itself was gradually corrupted, the people sunk lower and lower, until the whole head was sick and the whole heart faint. Ignorance of the true God, ignorance of the way of salvation, idolatry, ceremonies, superstition, took the place of knowledge and piety. The few who retained the simplicity of faith were in despair; the multitude were the slaves of superstition. The experiment of government as a supplementary aid to religion was a sad failure. The ruins of those old cities are not more striking witnesses of the decay of their governments than were the people themselves at the coming of Christ of the powerlessness of this force to elevate and save.

(3.) But there are other forces relied upon as sufficient to assist in the elevation and salvation of men. A knowledge of the arts and sciences, literature and philosophy, will refine and purify the people and raise in them true ideas of God and religion and make them penitent believers. This experiment was to be tried. It has been tried. In middle Asia and in Egypt there was very early a vast advance in in-

tellectual development. Then followed Greece and Rome. The fine arts, as well as those more practical, attained a perfection never since surpassed. If Athens as she was in the day of her glory could be unveiled before us; if you could stand in the forum and look round upon the temples, palaces, and statues that covered the hills of Rome, when Christ was born, we should see a beauty and grandeur in art incomparably superior to that presented by any city in Christendom. In the refinements and luxurious accommodations of ordinary life, the palace of Nero surpassed all modern edifices. Men go wild in their admiration of the few specimens of ancient sculpture that have survived the changes of time. In literature, Homer and Virgil still sing. In oratory, Demosthenes and Cicero still thunder. In history, Herodotus, Thucydides, and Tacitus are still read. In philosophy, the greatest modern intellects sit at the feet of Plato and Aristotle. The development of mind in all these directions was amazing. All that mind could do without Christ, they did do. What was the result? In one word, corruption—death. Art and science corrupted the simple faith of the people, and brought in superstition. Then philosophy came and undermined the superstitious worship of the ages in the minds of the most thoughtful, without leaving anything to take its place. Literature and art misrepresented and distorted the original revelation of God. Philosophy veiled God himself from the world; corruption of manners kept pace with the corruption of the truth; until vice, unbelief, and superstition held high carnival among men. All these experiments had been tried. All the forces which could be relied on to give men a fuller

knowledge of God, to preserve and make effective that which was originally intended for man's salvation, had been tried, and tried on a large and varied scale. They were all failures. The world was sinking into utter chaos, night, corruption; nothing was left for it but to go on degenerating lower and lower. Truth was gone, faith was dying; and the passions of men, without these, overleaped the boundaries set by a refined selfishness, and the end was death. It was time for a new creation—for a new revelation of God—for the divine Redeemer to appear. The fullness of time had come. The natural and originally divinely-given resources of men were exhausted. The way to heaven was blocked up; God was a myth, a distortion, a natural law, a nonentity to the soul. The whole creation groaned and travailed in pain; the noblest minds unconsciously hoped and prayed for his coming. *He came.*

And now, before I state to you the characteristics of this fullness of time, in reference to the world at large, which made it the chosen period of God for sending forth his Son, permit me to call your attention to the special preparations for this event in the Hebrew nation. The promise of Messiah had been made to our first parents immediately after the fall, and sacrifices were instituted to show that without the shedding of blood there was no remission of sin. All along to the deluge, God led his own people who held fast to their integrity. But when, after that event, the process of corruption had recommenced, he chose Abraham, and renewed the promise, giving it this limitation, that in his seed the nations of the world were to be blessed. The whole subsequent history of this people

to the time of Christ takes its character from this promise. Without this you can no more understand or account for it than you can for the vegetation of the world without the sun. In the fulfillment of this promise, you trace a silvery line of supernatural interference and revelation to the time of Christ. Taken to Egypt, they swell into the proportions of a nation. Amidst the terrors of ten supernatural plagues, through the parted waters of the sea, marshaled by the grandest figure in their whole history, they escape to the wilderness. Here, in the presence of the pillar of cloud and fire, dwelling for forty years, the new theocratic institutions are imbedded in the heart of the people, and they enter Canaan a strong, compact, well-ordered nation. The tendencies to sink down to the level of the idolatrous nations are counteracted by the written law, by a succession of inspired prophets, by fierce judgments, and temporary exile. Meanwhile, the heart of the nation is inspired by the grand promise of a Messiah given to Abraham. This promise glows brighter from age ; the faint aurora blushes and glows in anticipation of the morning ; John appears, the star that heralds the sun and tells that the night is past. The nation, in fear of foreign subjection, trembles, and looks upward to God for deliverance, and anxiously longs and waits for her anointed king. The prophecies are studied with a fearful interest ; they are discussed on every hillside, and in every habitation. The one vision that fills every eye is the reigning, conquering Messiah. This truth, through all the vicissitudes of national existence, has never been lost. Starting in Eden, renewed in Abraham, the grand fact of redemption for the

world, to preserve which and prepare the way for its realization this nation was set apart, has held on its course; has inspired the hopes of millions; has given voice to prophets; has been chorused in national psalms; has filled with anticipated glory the sacred temple. The hour has come; the place is prepared; Jesus is born; the scepter so long uplifted, waning at times, for a short period lowered to the Assyrians, next in the hand of Herod, is seized by the infant king as the sign of a spiritual and universal supremacy. Herod dies. The national constitution, its great purpose accomplished, is dissolved. The Roman eagles are on Mount Moriah; the Roman lictors and fasces are in the hall of judgment. The national heart throbs convulsively for a little, and then is still forever. Judah is dead; but Shiloh has come, and the law goes forth from Jerusalem to fill the world with light.

Now, then, let us look at some of the characteristics of this fullness of time, which rendered it specially fit to be the time when God should send forth his Son. And, first, you will notice the populousness of it. Had Christ appeared when the earth was unpeopled, and but a few hundreds or thousands roamed over it, the main elements of its power would have been wanting. Seen by few, heard by few, the Cross would have been a transient vision; it could not have planted itself in the heart of a world of living men. But now millions, hundreds of millions, waited for that vision. The light from Calvary could be seen over the earth; the voice from Calvary could pierce the cities and villages of a vast population.

1. Now, it is a fact most wonderful that the major part of this population, at least the civilized portion

of it, just at this time had been compacted into a great empire. Hitherto the development of nations had been individual, isolated, narrow. Limited in space, provincial in character, passionately attached to its own institutions, bitterly opposed to all others, without inter-communion, without common bonds and interests, differing in language and in customs, each nation was a fortress frowning defiance against all others, counting foreigners as spies and enemies, and pledged to resist unto the death all institutions and influences alien to their own national life; war was their normal condition; peace the exception. Here and there a few conquerors, like Nebuchadnezzar and Alexander, had grasped a few kingdoms, but death soon dissolved the connection. Had Christ appeared at that time, each separate nation would have barred out his disciples; he would have been to them but a foreign god, a provincial deity, seeking to overturn their national religion, and on its ruins erect a foreign dynasty. In order that the fullness of time should come, the divine providence must largely introduce new conditions into the relations of these worldly nations. More than seven hundred years had passed since an obscure adventurer had laid the material foundations of his kingdom on the Capitoline hill. His people, possessed of a rare genius for government, inspired during all their earlier course by a simple faith in God, and regard for the just rights of man, gradually extend their dominion over their own Italy, and then, with mighty strides, they march to the conquest of the world. They know it not, but a divine hand is marshaling their legions, to prepare the way for the coming of his *Son*. Scipio and Cæsar are

the unconscious soldiers of God. Seven hundred and fifty years have gone. From the gates of Hercules to the banks of Euphrates; from the deserts of Africa to the Frith of Solway their eagles have flown in triumph, and Rome is mistress of the world. This vast aggregation of kingdoms she rules with a stern, yet, in the main, a beneficent scepter. Her bridges span every stream; her roads, imperial in vastness, net-work this new world. Individual nations are known no more; Rome alone is felt, is heard supreme. From ocean to river, over mountain and valley, her couriers fly; thought flashes free from Mt. Lebanon to the Alps; the whispers of Carthage are heard at Corinth; the voices of Rome echo all round the vast concave. To the Roman citizen the gates of cities, of nations fly open, and the pathway of Prince Immanuel is prepared by pagan hands. Then *He* came, and on the central spot where these continents unite, the Cross was reared in view of all this people, and from that spot the messengers of truth went forth to proclaim it in every city and village. The temple of Janus was shut for the third time in 750 years; Rome in her imperial Augustus rested from conquest and in silence waited the coming of her King.

(3) It is also a circumstance of no small significance in reference to the fullness of time, that the languages of civilization, the medium of intercourse between all parts of this empire, had been practically reduced to two. The first was the language of Greece—the language of the highest form of literature, the language of science and philosophy, in which the ripest mental development of the ages was embodied. When Alexander in his meteor-like course swept

from the Ægean to the Nile, and from the Nile to the Euphrates, he carried with him the language and the science of Greece; when Rome conquered Greece, she carried westward with her the mental treasures of the vanquished; and thus the Greek had become the language of the more learned and thoughtful over a large section of the empire. The second was the Latin; the language of the conquerors, the language of law, everywhere spoken among the rulers, and largely among the ruled. In one of these languages the Old Testament was early translated, the New Testament originally written. In the other the whole was translated; and thus the way was prepared for its rapid spread through every part of the empire. A common language makes thought common; discovery, invention, science, religious truth, on these winged couriers traversed easily, rapidly, every part of the empire. Christ is crucified to-day on Calvary; before the week is past it is known in Rome. Possessed of these two tongues, the Apostles found hearers innumerable wherever they went; and thus a pathway for the truth was opened all over the civilized world.

(4) Another circumstance of vast importance was that this was the first age, since the promise was made to our first parents, when this stupendous event of the incarnation with all its attendant facts could be most fully attested, tested, and established on foundations that after-refinements of criticism could not possibly overturn. The civilization, the literature, the science, of this age contributed directly to this result, and made it the most fitting of all times for Christianity to commence its course. The conquests of Alexander had given a peculiar character to the civilization of the

countries around the eastern portions of the Mediterranean. The conquests of Rome had effected a similar result over the western world. They were terrible indeed in their progress; but afterward, like the subsidence of a resistless flood, there was deposited a new soil, rich and productive. There was a remarkable activity of thought; the combination of Grecian learning and Roman law stimulated mind all over the empire. It was the *age of history*. Men had passed out of the myths and shadows of primeval times. They stood out strong and clear in the light of a questioning, scrutinizing age. A thousand pens were busy recording the facts which thousands of minds were equally busy gathering up. Authentic history had fully commenced its course; and henceforth all facts of prime importance to the race within the circuit of that civilization would be so recorded that all future time should be able to know them. The great historians of the world, outside the Bible, when they reach this period move forward with all the confidence of assured knowledge. The materials for history in the form of coins, monuments, letters, books, and contemporary records, are *all-sufficient* to enable the historian to place us in a position from which we can trace out the vital currents in their flux and reflux through the most part of this wide empire. *Then God sent forth his Son*. Profane history records His life and death; sacred history records that life and death with all their wondrous connections—tens of thousands listened to the attesting witnesses of that sublime career, and faith in Jesus grew strong and began its mighty march through the world.

It was also an age of doubt and unbelief. There

was an immense intellectual fermentation among the educated classes. Men speculated on all subjects, divine and human. Philosophy had gone forth from Athens, and sat enthroned on the capitol. Her scholars were in every city and town of the empire; they thought with amazing acuteness; they reasoned with a most subtle logic; they wrote with classic elegance. Yet, outside of the Jewish nation, there was not a single mind that grasped with a firm faith even the truths of natural religion. They questioned, doubted everything, from the material world on which they trod to the Infinite God in whom they lived. Philosophy proved itself powerless to create; mighty only to destroy. It had undermined the superstitious faith on which Polytheism rested; but with it, all true faith had fallen. The multitude were wedded to their idols; but the leaders, the thinkers, the educated minds groped houseless, homeless in utter darkness. They had burned down God's temple; they had put out the sacred fire on the altar. Hungry, thirsty, benighted, they wandered amidst the ruins and beheld the eternal verities of God as specters and ghosts haunting their unquiet souls. From superstition they swung into naturalism, into pantheism, into cold, dark atheism. *Then God sent forth his Son.* At once the armed soldiers of science and philosophy bristled defiance. They questioned, argued, sneered; their blows fell fast and heavy; their dialectic arrows sought some vital spot in Christianity to pierce its heart. In vain! in vain! Its fame enlarged; its power increased; the cobwebs of their philosophy it brushed away; it silenced their finest intellects; it drew over to itself the noblest of

their army. Christianity, tested, opposed, questioned, denied, by the intellect of that age, rose superior to it all. The ark of God, moved by power divine, met all the waves of human opposition, and bore onward to the future the hopes, the redemption of humanity. Since then science and philosophy have, again and again, renewed the assault. Every argument they have framed, every conclusion they have reached, Christianity met, Christianity nullified in its cradle. God gave us the incarnate Son in an age when his claims could be tested and tried by all the force of human learning and skill. He came forth from the fiery trial triumphant. The kingdom he established, has beneath it the solid rock—all the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

(5.) Once more. In estimating this age as one peculiarly fitted for the coming of Christ, we must take into the account two closely-related facts. The first is the presence of Jews in the more prominent portions of the empire. The great dispersion, five hundred years before Christ, left many of them in the east. After the time of Alexander we find them in Egypt, in Asia Minor, in Greece, and finally in Rome itself. So numerous and strong were they in Alexandria, that, three hundred years before Christ, a translation of the Old Testament into Greek was made for their benefit. Wherever they went they held fast to their faith. They built synagogues for Sabbath worship, and as often as they were able sent their delegates with offerings to attend the great feasts and temple services at Jerusalem. Now when the disciples, in fulfillment of Christ's command, went forth to preach his gospel, they found these synagogues in large numbers,

and every synagogue was to them a pulpit with a fit audience, from which and to which they preached the truth. Thus the providence of God had singularly prepared the way for the diffusion of Christianity. Nor is this all. These Jews had influence. The great truth they held, many of the pagans had accepted. It had affected many minds outside of the synagogue. In some way the world at this time had come largely to share with them in the expectation that a great king was to arise, who should restore the world to order. I shall speak more particularly of this when we come to the visit of the wise men to the infant Jesus. It is enough for me now to state the undoubted fact that such an expectation existed in multitudes of the most reflective and earnest minds. The religions of the world were dying out. Judaism alone was vigorous and strong. Men longed and sighed for some one to arise who could shed light on the great problems of the soul and eternity. Human devices had failed. Human science had failed to find out God. The wisdom of men conducted only to doubt and despair. The great heart of humanity groaned in anguish for the truth of God. God, the soul, sin, the way of pardon, immortality—these were the great themes about which men always must think; on which they must feel; for these involve the value of this life and its destiny beyond the grave. And here all was darkness. Sin and death reigned on every side. Was there no hope for the hereafter; was there no way of escape from these terrible evils? Is death the end of man, or does he live—live to suffer and sin in another world? Is there a personal God? Is he willing to save? How can a man be just with him?

Oh! where shall a man go for light on these fearful themes? To history? It is full of fables and follies. To philosophy? It knows nothing, it does nothing but to deepen the darkness. How, oh how, from these black depths into which our sinning race had descended, did the anguished cry of souls despairing go up to God for light, for truth, for redemption! Then it was, when a world in darkness felt its need, a babe was born in Bethlehem—a God-man died on Calvary. The light kindled there blazed brighter and brighter. It spread from mountain-top to mountain-top—higher it rose, down into the valleys it sent its beams—millions of eyes were upturned to catch its beams. The dwellers on the mountain-tops and in the vales shouted together—“Praise God, his Son is born—our Redeemer has come—we know—we live forever!”

I have thus endeavored to set before you some of the reasons which delayed the great event of the incarnation; some of the peculiar preparations for it which, when completed, rendered this period the fullness of time. Other questions there are connected with this subject, to discuss which would demand a longer time than can now be devoted to them. But, so far as we have gone, there is enough seen to illustrate the wisdom of God in choosing just this time for the sending forth of his Son. Through long periods God wrought as it were in the outer circle, among material elements, to prepare the world for the abode of man; then when the fullness of time for this had come, He reformed the earth, planted it with vegetable and peopled it with animal life, and placed man a living soul upon it. When he had fallen, the promise of Messiah is given;

then, through a succession of changes and developments, the process of preparation for its fulfillment advances, until, at the end of 4,000 years, Christ the Lord, the mighty God, the Prince of Peace, is born. The event, so grand, so divine, the union of God with man, is worthy of all this preparation. The sublimest event in history, infinitely above material creations and natural laws, is the event for which the world waited, the event which now most stirs the hearts and wakens the thoughts, and is the foundation of the noblest hopes of all the race. Every man, who has ever heard of Jesus, feels in his inmost soul an instinctive anticipation of blessing from his power. Infidel or Christian, hating the doctrines of the Cross or loving them down deep in his soul, there is a felt want of just such a Savior, a half or well formed hope that to him this Christ will open the gates of immortality. You may feel uneasy when we preach to you of the worth of the soul; that no man can be just before God; that you must love God in Christ more than all earthly friends, because the sinfulness of your hearts resist the spiritual and holy conditions on which alone you can become the sons and daughters of God, the brethren and the redeemed of Jesus; because this very uneasiness, like the excitement which results from the fever in your blood, is the sign of your want of just this spiritual renovation. Yet, in spite of all this, you know that deep in your underlying consciousness is the secret hope that this Christ will become your salvation, and that if He were blotted out, the sun would be darkened and despair would settle upon your soul. Why then, O sinner, when God has made such vast preparations for this sublime event, when this

sun in the fullness of time has risen, why, when His beams shine on you and show the path to heaven, why, oh, why, will you criticise and find fault with the blessed message, with the prescriptions of the heavenly physician? Why, oh, why, will you doubt, deceive yourselves, and linger, and not avail yourselves at once of the wonderful redemption Jesus has wrought out for you? This alone can bless you here, can save you hereafter. Last Sabbath eve I read to you, in the opening of the service, the 27th Psalm—“The Lord is my light and my salvation.” A friend who had been in the Christian Commission attending upon our sick and wounded soldiers, remarked to me, that immediately after the battle that necessitated the surrender of Richmond, among a number of wounded brought into his ward there was one young man from Iowa; he was lying on his face, with a terrible wound in his back. The physician at once pronounced his case hopeless; the nurse spoke to him tenderly, and told him he must soon die. Raising himself on one arm, he said he had a mother and sisters in Iowa, but the Lord would take care of them; then, with a sweet smile on his countenance, he said, The “Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear!” and sank down and died. Oh! who would exchange the blessed confidence of this dying soldier, in the hour when heart and flesh shall fail you, for all the learning, the station, the wealth, of this world? Come, sinner, come to-night, and put your trust in our Immanuel, and He shall be to you light and salvation evermore!

## II.

## THE SUPERNATURAL.

*“And the angel answered and said unto her, the Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.”—*Luke i, 35.

WE are entering on the biography of the sublimest life in history. The origin of one whose character, rank, and influence stand out in such brilliant contrast with all the greatest and best of the past, is invested with the deepest interest. Whence came he? What unseen influence molded and informed this transcendent life? Was it a happy combination of merely human elements, or was there a divine life coming down into the human, and giving to the world a new birth far above and beyond the product of natural laws? The text answers this question; it introduces us at once to the supernatural; it gives to Christ an origin above the course of human generation. God is immediately his father. On one side he is the son of Mary; on the other, the son of the Highest. On this as a primary fact, Christianity is built. This fact and all kindred facts are opposed and denied by a large class of unbelievers. They assume that natural laws are never superseded, set aside, or repressed by any special divine influence; that we

have nothing to do in this world with anything but these laws of nature, and that these are all-sufficient to produce all the results which have occurred or ever will occur. Nature with them is the only God with whom we are conversant. Given, matter and a few elementary laws, and the universe is the result. There is no action of a divine mind in controlling or directing these forces; there is no immediate divine influence from without coming down into this world to affect its destiny or elevate its inhabitants. Nature is a perfect system, needing nothing, susceptible of no change, subject to no influence of a Superior Mind. On the other hand, Christianity holds that the great moving power in the universe is a divine, personal mind; that all matter and its laws, and all the intelligences of the world, and all the life in it, are the product of His creative will; that controls all things and supplements all other forces when He thinks best by His divine power, and so makes all His creatures subservient to His own design in creation. I propose in this discussion to set before you some of the grounds by which this opinion of the Christian church is justified, and then show you the special reason for our faith in Christ as the divine incarnation. It will be my endeavor to avoid metaphysical niceties, and limit the discussion to a few points level to the common sense of every man. Those who wish to see the subject discussed more elaborately should consult the written treatises—such as McCosh's *Divine Government*, Coleridge's works, Bushnell's *Nature and the Supernatural*, Prof. Fisher's work on the supernatural origin of Christianity, and more than all others,

the Bible itself, the finest monument of the supernatural.

1. Let me call your attention to the *presumptive* argument. Here we must at the outset discriminate between miracles technically so called, and that divine influence which works in providence, in revelation, and in the hearts of men. The miracle in this limited sense is a visible manifestation of *divine* power above and beyond the laws of nature or the power of the human will. It must be open and clear, so as to be fully attested. It must be wrought for an object sufficiently great to justify it. On the one hand, we say that a miracle must be so attested that its falsity would be as great a miracle as its truth. On the other hand, that the object to be accomplished by it must be special, of great importance, and one that in no other way could be effected. Even with these conditions of a miracle, it is obvious they can not be ordinary events, for this would destroy their efficacy. Besides, the occasions for them can only exist at rare intervals in the world's history. And this corresponds exactly with the facts of the case. The presumption, therefore, is against a miracle as an ordinary event—a presumption which must be overcome by the two conditions already stated: 1. The fullest attestation; 2. The character of the object to be attained, and the necessity for such a divine interference to accomplish it. The presumption is, therefore, not that miracles are never wrought, as some assert, but that they are not ordinary or usual. There is a very strong presumption that men of transcendent genius, like Plato, or Paul, or Napoleon, or Milton, are not to be found in every village; for God rarely endows men with such

powers, and raises them up only for great occasions. But this is no argument against their occasional appearance ; it does not prove that such men never have existed. It only puts us on our guard against confounding mediocrity with genius, and obliges us to wait for the proof before we give credit to any man for the possession of such transcendent endowments. The moment, however, we leave this limited field of divine influence and ascend to the broader one of Providence and revelation, the presumption is all on this side. The voice of the world is in favor of it. The belief in an immediate divine influence, above and beyond the laws of nature, working in the world, in man, executing the designs of a great moral Governor, and overruling matter and mind to effect His purposes, is as ancient as tradition, as universal as man. So true is this, that even those few philosophers who, here and there in the world's history, have sought to reason a personal, ruling God out of the universe, and reduce everything to nature, can hardly be deemed exceptions. They never emancipated themselves from this belief. What Plutarch says of some in his day is true of many, if not quite all. "These men," he says, "fear the gods and fly to them for succor. They flatter them and insult them ; they pray to them and complain of them." Prayer is the recognition of this belief. "For he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him." And this involves the whole theory of Christianity on this subject. Where, in the past or present, can you find men who, in the crisis of their lives, in the time of their trouble, do not in some way pray, as did the would-be atheist, Hume,

on his dying bed. Why, such men would be simply monstrosities, without the instincts, the feelings, of humanity. But if such a belief exists, and has always existed among men, how can you account for it? Only, it seems to me, on one or all of these suppositions: 1st, On the ground of an original revelation; 2d, for the reason that God has made such manifestations of Himself and His power in the world that men have felt compelled to recognize it; or, 3d, from the constitution of the soul, which, in its natural working, necessitates such a belief. To one or all of these causes combined you must trace back this belief in an immediate divine influence. A universal effect must have a universal cause; and, if so, you have an argument which no man, however acute his intellect, has ever been able to meet.

It may be said that men are superstitious; that they have abused this principle; that they multiplied gods, and associated horrible things with their worship. But the abuse of a thing is no argument against the existence or the excellence of that which is abused; it is an argument in its favor. Men may use powder for good purposes, to blast rocks and promote civilization, or they may abuse it in wounding the innocent, but they must first have the powder. Men may abuse the belief in a present overruling Providence, but the belief must exist before it can be abused. Whence came it? Answer me this! Nay, you can not answer it without admitting the power of God in it; and you, like all the rest of the world, are loth to admit the truth, that Nebuchadnezzar found out in his hour of sorrow, that God doeth according to his will, in the army of heaven and among

the inhabitants of the earth, and which Darius also affirms: "He is the living God; He delivereth and rescueth, and He maketh signs in heaven and in earth—who hath delivered Daniel from the power of the lions."

Passing from this presumptive argument, let us see what is the testimony of the system of the universe on this point. I say the system of the universe, not the system of nature or matter, for this is no system, it is only the fragment of a system, an inchoate, chaotic, imperfect parcel of the true system of the universe, in which God sits as the central power, and in whom alone it is complete. This system is a series of ascending existences, the higher existence in each case being invested with new powers that overrule and sometimes supersede those of the lower; while God causes, sustains, and by His immediate influence overrules and perfects the whole.

In describing this system we begin with mere matter—naked, inorganic, like a grain of sand. The chief forces or tendencies belonging to it are gravity, which makes every particle tend to the center of the largest mass and momentum, or the tendency when at rest to continue so, or when moved from without to continue in motion. Now we find that on this dead mass there are certain agencies acting which more or less counteract or override these laws of momentum and gravity. Take a drop of water—left in a certain state it would remain forever the same. But change the conditions around it, withdraw the heat that is in it, and it forms itself into solid crystals; or, place it in a dry atmosphere and it flies off in vapor. Its apparent nature and form are wholly changed.

And thus, in this lowest part of the system, nature works against nature, and one law is superseded by another.

Ascend a little to another existence of the series. Here is an acorn. It is apparently nothing but organized matter. Put it in the ground. Presently it swells; it grows; it rises above the ground; it takes to itself the sun, the air, the moisture, the particles it needs from the ground; it forms roots under ground; it forms branches and leaves above it; month after month, year after year, for hundreds of years, it lifts itself into the air, it holds ton upon ton of solid matter scores of feet above the ground, and spreads its branches over half an acre. The law of gravity tries to pull it down; it fails. The winds try to upset it; they fail. In direct violation of the primary law of matter, it pushes away from the centre of the earth. It overrides, supersedes, nullifies, violates one of the most universal of natural laws, and in its majesty lifting its trunk to heaven proclaims to all that nature's laws are not inviolate. But, says the materialist, this is the result of the laws of nature. Then we must admit that one law of nature may violate or supersede another. But I deny that nature is the same in both cases. Why does the tree grow? He says, in consequence of certain chemical or natural laws. I deny this, and affirm that there is here a new order of existence which has life, and it is this life that is the real cause. This higher existence overrides and appropriates or disregards the laws of nature. Crush the acorn, will it grow? Why not? Because its life is destroyed. Kill the tree; at once leaves, branches, and finally trunk yield to the law of gravitation and

fall. What is this life? Can you see it? Can you detect it by chemical analysis? If it is some inherent force of nature, chemists may get hold of it, may produce it. They are all as blind, as helpless as the child you hold on your knee. It is life, a new existence invested with power above naked matter to overrule some of the laws of nature. Talk about nature producing, originally from its own bosom, the infinite forms of vegetable life and beauty that fill the world! Why, you might as well talk of the law of gravity as sufficient to fire a cannon ball against its own proper nature to the moon. God is love; he created every seed, and gave it power to assimilate or counteract nature, according to the wants of its new life. Ascend to another existence in the series. Take animal life, instinctive, invested with powers above dead matter, above the tree and flower. The horse, how he balances himself and leaps against the force of gravity; how he runs and stops against the law of momentum; how he hears your voice and tames himself to your will. Here is a new kind of life; not forces of nature; not chemical laws; but life self-poised, and maintaining itself against some of these very laws; life, not self-originated, not born of nature, but life created originally by God himself.

And now we must make another ascent. Man appears. A new life beams high above the others; Moses says *he* is made in the image of God. Look at him. You see that rational soul that takes in all ideas: time, space, spirit, systems of things, God himself; that moral nature that realizes obligation and knows what rectitude and holiness and divine love are; that causative will that originates, moves, acts in his own

personality ; that turns his powers hither and thither on matter, on mind ; that articulate man, speaking over centuries, hearing over ages ; that inventive man, combining new forces out of old ones ; that dominating soul, changing the face of nature, subjecting the brutes and all life and all dead matter to do his bidding ; that far-seeing spirit, looking into and anticipating the future. Here is a new life. Natural powers are the instruments with which mind works out its grand results. These he violates, supersedes, sets one against another, combines as he thinks best. Surely this being, in his noble personality, is a faint image of the personal God. Here is a new power, which is not nature, but which takes nature and uses it to advance high interests. Talk about the inviolability of the laws of nature ! Why, every house he builds, every steam engine he constructs, every movement of his arm is a violation of some law of nature. While the whole science of medicine is just the effort to counterwork and neutralize one law of nature by another. Every steamship that, against the wind, against the tide, carries its precious freight above the waves is, in some respects, a violation of nature. In this realm of the rational and the spiritual, God invests this living soul with powers superior to nature—supernatural in some respects. The faint image of God, he exercises power in a low degree like God : the power of thought, of will, of action ; thrust in among these powers of nature, he asserts a qualified supremacy over them, and moves in a sphere, in some respects, far above them.

Have we now reached the crown of the system of the universe ? Is man the highest point in it ? So say

the atheist, the pantheist. But not so says the Christian. The system, as yet, is no system; it is incomplete; it has beginnings, but no endings; justice and injustice; sin and holiness; light and darkness; ideas, thoughts, emotions that anticipate another sphere, but do not reach it, all mingled together in chaos and confusion. The building is only half erected. The relation of the soul to God and the object of its existence are undefined and unreached. The courses of things are out of joint. They shock the noblest and best feelings of our higher nature. The world groans and travails in pain for the manifestation of the sons of God. There is, there must be another and a still higher sphere of existence, where wrong shall be righted; where the good and the evil shall be separated; where retribution shall complete its work; where the soul shall realize its chosen destiny, where the divine government shall be vindicated alike in its love and its wrath; where, out of all these confusions, crimes sorrows, perversions of time, God shall bring forth order, and harmonize all parts of his government, and show the infinite wisdom that has ever guided him. In this higher sphere there are already superior beings. This has its own laws, and from it influences come down into this lower sphere, superior to nature, aiding the good, opening truth to the ignorant, working all through the mass of humanity. Here Christ reigns, and from this as his throne he is at work building up his kingdom here, according to his own wisdom, and preparing for a final demonstration that will show that God's moral government is as perfect and finished as any of the most exquisite works of his hand in the material world.

Now let us gather up the elements of this argument. In the system which God has made, we see him first creating dead matter and giving it certain laws. Then we see him creating life; vegetable life, with powers superior to dead matter, and able to overcome its laws. Next he creates brute life, superior to all the rest. Then he places man upon the earth, and gives him powers over all other kinds of matter and life; power to combine and use and counteract the forces of nature. Then we ascend to the higher sphere of future existence, from which influences descend superior to all those at such line—supernatural influences, mighty to suspend or quicken the laws of mere nature and much in harmony with the higher nature of man. Now I say that, by the necessity of the case, by the inexorable laws of logic, by the necessary inferences warranted by man's constitution and the state of the divine government here, it must be that God is perpetually controlling, overruling all parts of his creation so as to accomplish his purposes in respect to man; that he is not only able, but that it is a necessary part of his complete system to supplement the laws and influences of the lower by the laws and influences of a higher sphere of action, and that in all this he is acting in harmony with his own method as we see it revealed in nature around us. From this higher sphere above us God must be perpetually at work through mightier powers in governing, controlling all things, so as to vindicate at last his infinite wisdom. And instead of supposing that God had finished his work in creation and in man, we are driven by the sternest facts to the opinion that he is ever working in man and around him, by means natural

and supernatural, in preparing him for another sphere of being, in which his system shall find its perfection and his attributes shall appear illustrated most gloriously to the highest intelligences of the universe.

Let us now consider some of the facts in the history of the earth itself, which proves that God has put forth upon it special supernatural powers. The first fact is creation itself. The second is that, subsequent to the creation, in the process of the preparation for the abode of man, changes have taken place which necessitate the direct interference of the creator—changes for which no natural laws can possibly account. These changes are written in the structure of the earth itself. And here permit me to say that I greatly honor those men who for the last forty years have been engaged in investigating the facts connected with the structure and constitution of the earth in which we live. Geology is yet in its infancy. And it is not at all strange that some of the explorers in this new field should reach conclusions which a broader induction from a larger mass of facts would not warrant. Like every other science, it builds and then pulls down in order to erect a more substantial structure. In reference to this, as to every other science, Christianity has only to abide the results of time and patient research in indicating the essential harmony between creation and revelation. Long before geology began its investigations, some of the ablest interpreters of the Bible were of the opinion that long periods intervened between the creation as described in the first verse of Genesis and the subsequent formation of the earth, and the final fitting it up for man in the six days. There is one class of men, however, for whose hearts,

to say nothing of their understanding, we have no sort of respect; men who, when a fact of natural science seems to militate against the Bible, are loud in the demonstrations of their infidelity, like the croaking of frogs on a warm spring night; but when a fact makes in favor of the truth of revelation, are as silent as those frogs when the sun rises. But to the point before us. Geologists almost unanimously affirm that the earth has undergone vast changes—changes that preceded the present creation and form of things around us. During some of these periods there was an immense vitality of both the animal and the vegetable.

Then, again, there are great cataclysms, breaks in the order of things, in which all animal and vegetable life perished. There are periods of heat when they could not exist, and then of cold, when the earth, or large parts of it, were covered with ice and snow. Now, the point reached by these facts is this: That all the life we now see on the earth must have been produced by a direct act of divine power. Immense remains there are of old species that died in these changes, but they are totally distinct from anything we now see on the earth. There are no transmutations from them to our present creation, but a dead blank, necessitating the divine interference to produce that which is now. All the powers of natural philosophy could not give us the simplest shrub. Now, according to the testimony of the earth itself, God has been at work by his direct, intelligent, personal, supernatural power preparing the earth for its present inhabitants, and then, when the time came, when the earth was left after all these changes without power and void of all life, his divine spirit went forth, as

Moses has described it, and gave forth life in all its forms, and man as the lord of the world. Where now is the argument against miracles? To the celestial visitants who watch the formation of the earth, what a glorious series of miracles was there all over this earth! Spinoza said that if you could prove to him the resurrection of Christ, he would break his system to pieces. Well, here is the earth itself demonstrating any quantity of creations. Here is God himself, instead of leaving the world to develop itself, by certain natural laws, thrusting his almighty hand right down into them, arresting their operations, changing all things, and giving a new life to the world. Where is pantheism now? No consistent deist, admitting the existence of a personal God and creation, can deny the probability of a direct supernatural agency in the world wherever there may be a necessity for it. Such men as Theodore Parker, half pantheist, half deist, now believing in mere natural development, and then, forced by his higher nature to go to God in prayer, and thus recognize a direct divine influence upon the world, are simply illogical and inconsistent. The true, consistent deist at once admits these things, and only asks for a necessity for divine interference and proper proof of the fact. Now, if God did thus interfere in the preparation of the material world for man, the inference is irresistible that, in this higher sphere of training man for eternity, he will interfere just as often and as constantly as the necessity of the case requires. He is shown to be a providential ruler over the world, working all after the counsel of his will, maintaining his government, natural and moral, over the world and man, and carrying forward his own

plan to its grand conclusion. You may pray to God, for he is not deaf nor afar off, nor unconcerned, but ever near thee, O man; he is administering his government over thee, and his power is with all nature and in thy own soul.

I state as another argument for a supernatural influence the actual necessities and wants of man. It has been contended with great force that man, without the supernatural communication of certain original truths and knowledge, could not have continued to exist on the earth; and Dr. Livingstone, from his observations in Southern Africa, affirms the same truth. (1.) But, be this as it may, it is certain that, left to himself in a mere state of nature, man, without a supernatural revelation of some kind, never could develop his intellect or rise from the lowest state of barbarism. In point of fact all the great developments of the race have taken place under the inspiration of religious ideas and a knowledge originally communicated supernaturally. And the moment the supernatural ceased to influence them they have degenerated both intellectually and morally.

(2.) Man needs in this world the influence of a supernatural government in order to keep him from utter self-destruction and enable him to live as a member of civilized society. Government of some kind is essential. What is the state? It is not a government of mere nature. Men are not left to do as they please, to suffer or enjoy solely as they shall keep or violate natural laws. The state comes in and rules supernaturally, outside of and above nature, makes its laws and affixes its penalty. And all experience shows that there is and can be no civilization

without this. Yea, more than this is true. It is found that state government and well-ordered society can not exist without the divine sanctions of a supernatural government that shall reach the consciences and hearts of men. Warburton has shown by a vast array of evidence that all successful governments from the foundation of the world have been built upon and maintained by the aid of a divine, moral government, ruling and influencing man supernaturally, and that as soon as faith in such a spiritual and mighty governor ceases to exist, then civilization and order cease, and brute passions rule.

(3.) Man needs, more than all, special light on his future destiny. He naturally desires to know whether he is to die like the brutes, or exist hereafter. This is an awfully momentous question. Nature is silent concerning it. God alone can directly answer it. He desires to know how, as a sinner, he can be justified and saved. Nature is silent. God only by supernaturally inspiring men can reveal the answer, and then he must by miracles attest the authority of the prophet who declares to us the truth. And thus, without attempting to exhaust this subject or present it fully, it will be found that man's highest welfare in this life demands that he shall be aided by a present, supernatural government, and that all his nature cries out for a present, ruling, speaking God. I condense into a few lines here thoughts that demand volumes fully to unfold them. Man, society, civilization, eternity, demand, authorize, necessitate a living, personal God, ruling and exerting his divine power constantly in this world.

I now ask your attention to the Bible itself as an ar-

gument for the supernatural. In doing this, I do not beg the principle at issue. For here is confessedly the most wonderful book in the world. Look at it in what light you please—the age when it was written, its actual contents, its position and character in comparison with all other books, sacred or profane. There is nothing like it, nothing to be compared with it, any more than you compare the moon with the sun. Its statements of facts that only God could have revealed; its prophecies; its clear inculcation of the divine law, the only true basis of morality and religion; its sublime revelations of the divine character in its unity, its justice, and its love; the relations of man to God, and the way of pardon and life hereafter set forth in such varied lights; the holy breathings of its psalms; its blessed promises of hope and assistance to men in their attempts to serve God, and in their sorrow and care; its own wonderful consistency and unity, though uttered by different voices through two thousand years; yea, all its sublime lessons, covering the life of every man here, and opening to him the gates of a glorious heaven hereafter; these set it above all other books; these show it to be divine. All through this book, from Genesis to Revelation, a personal, ruling God, doing supernatural works, resting upon some supernatural influence, promising supernatural assistance, throbs and glows. Eliminate from it all that is above nature, all that is directly divine, and you have nothing left; you have blotted the most wonderful of books out of existence. To suppose that such a book is the product of merely natural impulses is too absurd for refutation. It is practically assigning to it no cause at all. It is just as

good logic as that which makes this great universe the product of chance or natural law.

Nor have we the book alone; we have one nation with all its institutions as its partial exponent and monument. The Jewish nation, in its history and marked character, as it existed in Palestine, is the direct product of this book. The existence and character of this nation is an unsolved and unsolvable enigma on any other supposition than the truthfulness of this book. There is no other possible reason why the Jews differed so totally from all the rest of the world in their grand religious ideas and institutions save this one, that God spoke to them and wrought among them supernaturally. As surely as every event infers an adequate cause, so surely does this book and this nature unitedly infer a present God supernaturally inspiring His people, etc., working His miracles, guiding their great leaders, fixing their religious constitution, and using them to prepare the way for the grandest manifestation of Himself in his incarnate *Son*.

And now we have reached the crowning fact in the supernatural government of God over our race—the Incarnation. No consistent deist will deny the possibility of this event. We will only ask, first, for an object worthy of such a union of the divine and human, and, second, for a suitable attestation of the fact. And that which he asks for we have. The object of the incarnation is: (1.) To exhibit a perfect humanity in its obedience to the divine law; (2.) By an actual sacrifice on the cross to answer the question how God can be just and yet justify the believer; and (3.) To constitute a living Redeemer, who, as the head of the

church, should from himself carry forward a system of influences through which man should be brought into union with God and prepared for an immortal life. These are the grand objects of the incarnation, wide as the race, vast as the soul of man. Whoever admits these objects as necessary and legitimate justifies the incarnation. Whoever denies them has in his hands a task that as yet no man or body of men since the creation has been able to perform—the task of showing how without such an incarnation these vital objects can possibly be accomplished. Millions on millions have accepted them in accepting Jesus as the Savior of man. Man's heart everywhere longs for just such a living, divine Redeemer. He meets the deepest, highest wants of the soul here and in the life to come.

2. The attestation of this event. Originally it could be known only to those at first most interested in it. But here how beautiful, how chaste, how sublime, is the annunciation to Mary. How unlike anything else in history! How befitting the great event! How impossible that it could be imagined or invented! Then how the life, the character, the works of Christ attest it! This being, superior to humanity, yet concentrating in himself all the noblest traits of humanity, standing out from the ages immeasurably above all their highest minds, radiating from himself light on all the highest questions the soul asks; sending out influences that renew the heart, enlighten, purify, save it; gathering round his cross myriads who in joy and hope trust him and follow him in the paths of love and obedience, and would lay down their lives for him; establishing a spiritual kingdom that triumphs

over superstition and sin, and brings salvation to the lost—a kingdom which, as it advances in this dark world, everywhere renews it and turns its vile deserts, its corrupt Sodoms, into Sharon vales and temples of the most High. This is the attestation of the incarnation. Miracles there were indeed at its opening, but the mightiest miracle of all is the manifold supernatural power that everywhere attends its progress, and lifts humanity into closer union and likeness to the heavenly Father. Christianity in its true history attests the incarnation. No wonder the greatest minds, as they contemplate Christ in his wondrous influence, cry out with the Roman soldier, “Surely this is the son of God.” No wonder Napoleon affirmed in this view, “Christ is divine.”

Oh! to-night I bear the glad tidings to you, the tidings of a divine Savior for your souls. Ask nature, how can I be saved? She is silent. Ask profane history. All is silence. Ask philosophy. Silent still. Ask Jesus, and a voice comes to you in love: “I bore thy sins on the tree. I opened the gates of heaven for you. I proclaimed life and immortality. Believe on me.”

## III.

## MARY, THE MOTHER OF JESUS.

“*And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou that art highly favored, the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou among women.*”—Luke i, 28.

It is remarkable how little is said in the Scriptures of many of the most eminent saints. They are never magnified and lauded as men eulogize their great ones. Sometimes their biography is given in a single line. “*Enoch walked with God, and was not, for God took him.*” Occasionally their faith is commended and held up for imitation. And this is all. *One Being* alone who bore our nature is exalted; one alone dwells in the radiance of glory more than human—Jesus, the incarnate Son of the Highest. Mary is no exception to this rule. As the mother from whom His human nature is derived, her person is illumined by the glory which distinguishes His incarnation; but the moment He assumes His own individuality she retires into the common mass of the faithful, and, with the exception of three or four brief allusions, is heard of no more. All this is profoundly instructive. It enables us at once to determine her position and relationship to the Church of God. She is simply a faithful believer, chosen of God to be the happy mother of whom Christ according to the flesh should be born, and under whose influence His early life should be spent.

This position, the most exalted ever conferred on woman, is hers. But to the church she sustains no official relation; she is invested with no special power. Here she is simply a believer; redeemed by the same blood; subject to the same infirmities; exposed to the same trials, with every other one of her sex. The dogma of her immaculate sinlessness is nowhere so much as hinted at in Scripture. The terms "highly favored" and "blessed," applied to her, contain no such implication. Indeed, they are used elsewhere in Scripture in reference to those who were confessedly sinful. The argument from the necessity of the case is equally fallacious. If it was necessary that Mary should be sinless in order that Christ might be sinless, then it would be necessary that her parents should be sinless; and so on, ascending through the entire race. There is no such necessity. Christ is to be possessed of our human nature in all its height and depth of passion, and exposure to fierce temptation, to sorrow, and to death. One thing alone distinguishes that nature from all the other sons of Adam, and that is the spirit of obedience that enabled Him to be tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. This, divine grace, working above and beyond the ordinary laws of generation, accomplished in Him. But Mary is no exception to the race. She belonged indeed to a theocratic race. A long line of pious ancestors exerted over her its peculiar elevating power. But this distinction she enjoyed in common with Elizabeth, and Anna, and many others, who devoutly waited for the coming of their Lord. Her peculiar distinction, her high honor, her crown of blessedness among women, is not what she was in herself, but in the fact that from her pro-

ceeded that human nature in which the divine became incarnate to redeem the world. In common with every other mother, she must sit at His feet, be purified by His spirit, and be ransomed by His blood.

Let us now review her life and character in accordance with the brief notices given us in this book. Of her early life, in distinction from others of her class, we know absolutely nothing. The silly legends framed in after centuries are not worthy of a moment's attention. She grew up at Nazareth. Her culture was Jewish; her literature, her science, her religion, were all contained in the Holy Scriptures. These were her daily study; these the influence that pervaded, purified, exalted her affections. The clear expositions of divine law; the holy breathings of the psalms, the sublime utterances of the prophets, the origin, history, and destiny of her race so brilliantly illuminated by the presence and power of Jehovah, molded and inspired her whole soul. Whatever may be said of natural science as an educating force, it is weakness beside these grand spiritual thoughts and sublime truths in imparting elevation, power, self-reliance to a human soul. Even when received only in the intellect, what prodigious effects they have wrought! But when they are assimilated, and the heart yields itself to them, then they constitute a faith which is inspirative, intelligent, firm; strength almost sublime. Man is in alliance with God, and all the powers of this world and eternity are his possession. These truths were her study from childhood. She yielded herself to their influence; faith in God and in his promises sprang to life in her soul. In common with her nation, the prophecies of Messiah were her faith. In common with the female

descendants of David, she, too, may have cherished the hope of being his mother. In the full maturity of her sweet maidenhood she is betrothed to her kinsman Joseph. The truly devout Jews spent much time in secret prayer and study of the Bible. In many of their houses there was a special place set apart for this object. Mary, doubtless, was much in prayer and in the perusal of the Scriptures. Nor is it unnatural to suppose that it was at such an hour of rapt contemplation and holy communion with God that Gabriel appeared to her. "Hail! highly favored, the Lord is with thee; blessed among women art thou." The appearance of the angel, his words so remarkable, surprise and trouble her. She fears lest this gracious salutation be only the prelude to some great trial. Gabriel reads in her countenance the emotions that agitate her breast; he assures her of the favor of God, and then announces the sublime fact, of all others the most desired by every female of the house of David, that she is elected to be the mother of Messiah. But she is unmarried; the thought of pollution is intolerable; she can not rise at once above the idea of natural law to the mysterious inworking power of Him who created nature; and, in her perplexity and maiden innocence, she asks, how? *how* shall this be? Nothing can be more natural, nothing more guileless, nothing more significant of her virgin purity! The question is answered. Lifting her soul out of the sphere of the natural into the higher realm of the spiritual, where God works according to laws that prevail among nobler beings, Gabriel says, "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore also that holy thing which

shall be born of thee, shall be called the Son of God." "With God nothing is impossible." And as a sign and evidence to assure her faith, he informs her that her cousin Elizabeth in her old age is about to bear a son. She hears, she believes, she submits; "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word!" The event, so grand in itself, yet so strange, so unexpected in its accomplishment, according to all human calculations, must cover her future with darkness. Repudiation by her betrothed; disgrace the most agonizing to her pure spirit, and death according to human law, awaited her. How shall she vindicate her innocence? Who will believe her simple story? Then the faith which animated her father Abraham when he laid Isaac upon the altar, the faith which made Daniel mightier than the lions, lifted her above this horrible darkness, these appalling anticipations, into the serene light of God's presence. The Lord will in his time vindicate his own work; calmly she will trust, unreservedly she will commit herself to Him. "Be it unto me according to thy word!" And so here, and elsewhere in this divine book, but nowhere else on earth, we find ourselves among those exalted souls, who, though compassed about with human infirmities, heard the voice of a present God, and, grasping his promises by a living faith, trod upon the world with all its attractions and its terrors.

Let us pause a moment and look upon this scene. The grandest event in history is described in language the most remarkable ever recorded by mortal hands. The words of Mary, how artless! how truthful! how befitting her circumstances! how expressive of her

character! how brief and simple! The language of Gabriel, how beautiful! how supernatural! how sublime! how it lifts the soul above the gross and the sensual into the serene presence of God! how like a transparent robe of light it reveals while it adorns the majesty of the Highest! How could the incarnation of the Son of God be announced to us in terms more justly expressive of the simple grandeur of his nature, or the unspeakable importance of his mission! Bring hither to-day the most remarkable classics of the world, select from them the brightest jewels that sparkle in the crown of genius; compared with this treasured memory of a Jewish maiden they are as the composites and pastes of the jeweler to the Koh-i-noor, the crown jewel of the world. But so it ever is. When God speaks, though it be through human or angelic lips, the voices of human genius sink into the insignificant babblings of childhood; they are as the explosions of man's mightiest gunnery in the presence of the lightning flashes and thunder-roll of the artillery of the skies.

The divine message is given; the human response received; Gabriel departs. Then Mary, eager to see with her own eyes the truth of the sign given her; eager to communicate to Elizabeth the news of this wondrous annunciation; eager to hold communion with her on these themes, the loftiest and most comprehensive ever made known to man, hurries with characteristic energy, upborne by this new inspiration, to the hill country of Judah, south of Jerusalem, and to Jutta, the priestly city, where Zachariah dwelt. It is distant from Nazareth, directly south, a journey of three or four days as men traveled it then and now.

She enters the house of her cousin, but ere she can open her lips, her message is anticipated. In a sudden burst of inspiration, Elizabeth exclaims: "Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb!" Mary instantly responds in that hymn which, from that day to this, has echoed and re-echoed in all the oratories and temples of the Christian world: "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour. For he hath regarded the low estate of his hand-maiden; for behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed. For He that is mighty hath done to me great things; and holy is His name. And His mercy is on them that fear Him, from generation to generation," etc. This is the first Christian hymn, called the *magnificat*, from its opening: "My soul doth *magnify* the Lord." Parts of it are found in the Song of Hannah, and in other Scriptures; for Mary's mind was filled with the sublime thoughts and beautiful imagery of the Old Testament. But she has here combined them in one concrete whole—pervaded by her personality; illustrative of her experience; and expressive of her sense of the wonderful goodness of God to her and to all His people, Israel, in the anticipated coming of the great Messiah. What lofty faith; what heavenly love; what visions of mercy flashing back to Abraham and the promise, and forward to the oucoming generations of lowly believers, does it reveal to us! So pure, so spiritual, so expressive of her experience, yet so in sympathy with the heart of Christianity, that it has fired and exalted the souls of the faithful in every age. This sweet hymn breaks upon us as a choral from the heart of universal love and faith.

Here these devout kinswomen, elected to be the mothers of Messiah and his forerunner, dwelt together, communing on sacred themes, and studying those precious prophecies and promises which through them were to attain their fulfillment. How fitting and how beautiful that these two lives should, just at this time, run together and mingle their thoughts, their prayers, their aspirations, in anticipation of these great events.

At length months have passed, and Mary returns to Nazareth—returns strengthened and refreshed in spirit to take up her cross and encounter the fearful trial which might be in store for her. Yet hear how her present Lord gently lifts up the cross, and the fear and the terror vanishes from her heart. Instead of repudiation, disgrace, a public trial, perhaps death, there is only love and sacred marriage. Joseph, instructed from on high, turns from his natural purpose, and takes her joyfully to his home and his heart. Oh! thus, in instances without number, when the cross we must bear looked so heavy, and the lions we must face seemed so ferocious, has faith triumphed! The dear Lord has made the cross lighter than a feather; the lions became lambs. Another sacrifice has been substituted in place of the beloved Isaac; and, instead of sorrow and tears, the heart has been filled with gladness, and the lips have been opened in songs of praise. Christian, when the future seems darkest, and thou seest no hope, no brightness emanating from earth, fear not! Above the clouds shines serenely the unchanging sun, and in an instant through the rift his beams may fill thy heart with light!

Mary now appears at Bethlehem, and Christ is born.

Amidst all the wondrous scenes which distinguished that event, but one thing is recorded of her, and the same is said of her again on a subsequent occasion. She kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart. She photographed them in her memory, to be reproduced in due time, when the sacred record should be made up for the use of the future church. They dwelt there as blessed confirmations of all that the angel had foretold. She was not a talkative, nor a very demonstrative woman. She loved to retire into herself and commune with God. She, the most honored among women, shrank with true womanly modesty from thrusting herself out of her sphere or into public notice. True piety, where it is deepest, is most quiet. The shallow brook rushes with noise and foam over its rocky bed. The deep stream moves on calmly, fertilizing broad acres. It is self-contained, steady, progressive; it sounds no trumpet; it beats no drum; it aspires not after worldly notoriety; it seeks not to have its name on every lip; it frets not at the seeming narrowness of its sphere. Content with God's ordination, it diffuses the fragrance of its presence as the beauteous flower gently breathes its perfume upon the passer-by. As a wife and mother, Mary retires from public view. In the seclusion of Nazareth, she rounds out her domestic life in fulfilling all wifely and motherly duties. Her faith, her love, lightens the daily burden of care, cheers her husband's heart, and fills her home with the serene atmosphere of piety and peace. Her precious Son, informed with a divine grace, growing in favor with God and man, brightens with his love and cheerful obedience every hour of her life; already he who is to be the Savior of the

world sheds upon her the benediction of his holy presence.

From this time the allusions to her in the Scriptures are few and brief; and, what is most remarkable, three of these contain an implied reproof. Once, before the commencement of his ministry, Jesus is taken by his parents to Jerusalem. On their return, the child, now passing into youth, tarries behind, and, the consciousness of his divine life revealing itself, attracted to the temple, he discusses with the learned teachers of the law those themes of which he is to be at once the chief subject and most magnificent expounder. His parents, missing him after a time, return to Jerusalem. His mother, disturbed, alarmed, sorrowing, relentingly questions Him: "Son! why hast thou thus dealt with us? Behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing." And he said unto her: "How is it that ye sought me? Wist ye not that I must be about *my* Father's business?" Oh! Mary, where is thy faith in God? thy faith in thy divine Son? Thy weak heart has failed thee. And thus hast thou taught us how often we, like thee, imperfect, sinful, are disturbed and care-burdened for those whom with a holy faith we should trust to the keeping of Him whose promise never fails. Oh! parents, who in holy baptism have consecrated your little ones to God, and are seeking to train them with a wise and gentle nurture for a useful life and happy immortality, see here mirrored thy weakness! See here, too, the sure ground of a contented, quiet confidence! Ye are troubled about their future; troubled if sickness comes upon them; troubled if, for a little, they are absent from you: Trust ye in Jesus! Hold these

precious ones fast to the mercy-seat. Hope on, trust on, though not at once ye find them in the kingdom. Days, years, may pass; pray still; and then, at length, ye may see them sitting joyfully in the temple of your God.

The next allusion to Mary is on a very different occasion. There is a marriage at Cana, a few miles north of Nazareth. Mary is there and Jesus. It is shortly after the commencement of his public ministry. During the festival the wine is exhausted. Then Mary, as his mother, and unquestionably presuming upon that fact, says to Jesus, "They have no wine," indicating that he could and ought to supply it. The answer is direct reproof of her presumption. "Woman, what have I to do with thee? Mine hour is not yet come." Consult the cases in which the first part of this answer is used in other parts of scripture, and you will find that it is of the nature of a reproof. Jesus as Messiah has now entered upon his work. It belongs to no human being to dictate to him when he shall use his divine power to work a miracle. Mary has thrust herself out of her sphere. She has made more than a mistake—she has sinned, and that too in respect to a matter of the gravest magnitude; nor is it any justification that her motive was one of kindness. The sphere of Jesus was infinitely above hers. She knew it. It was for her to sit at his feet and quietly wait till he should deem it best to act. Here, too, we see how the faithful and the devoted children of God are still compassed about with infirmity,—why David prays to be delivered from presumptuous sins. How at times we all feel as if we could dictate to God, and

that our will and our way must be the best! Kind and generous impulses are noble, but a man may indulge them so as to violate other rights, and bring guilt upon his own soul. God is greater than man; and if to please man we infringe upon the authority of God, we shall not be held guiltless. Mary feels the reproof and humbly retires. She is not angry; her humility shines out, the moment she is sensible of her sin. And so the Christian, under the divine reproaches, quietly submits, and in lowliness leaves all to the disposal of his heavenly father.

Only once again does Mary appear as an actor during the ministry of her Son. Christ is pressed on all sides by eager listeners. He is incessantly engaged in his great work. In the midst of his labors Mary seeks an interview—Matt. xii. 46. Chrysostom thinks she was impelled by a desire to show her authority and relationship; but this is not consistent with Mary's character. Rather would we suppose with others that her maternal anxieties and love for her son, sought to induce him to take some repose. But, whatever the motive, Jesus refuses to see her, and in so doing announces a fundamental idea of his kingdom. "Then said one unto him, Behold, thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to speak with thee. But he answered and said unto him that told him, Who is my mother, and who are my brethren? And he stretched forth his hand toward his disciples and said, Behold, my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of my father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother." My kingdom is not founded on family or earthly relationship. It is a kingdom of faith and love alone.

Here all are on a level—all brethren and sisters in me by faith.

Once again we see Mary before the cross when the sword has pierced her soul, and Jesus commits her to the tender care of the beloved John. Then when he is risen and ascended, she is seen among the faithful few, who in prayer await the pentecostal baptism. Here she vanishes from our view. Of her after life and death no authentic record remains. This brief review of her life is specially instructive in view of the claims which have been set up for her.

We see her to have been a devout Jewish maiden, a faithful wife, a loving mother, illustrating in her life a true womanhood. Her faith, her study of the scriptures, her humility, her modesty, her fidelity—all commend her as an example of the character produced by the grace of God. Not a single hint is given of her sinlessness, or that she differed in her nature from Elizabeth or Anna, or any of those devout and loving women who followed Christ to the cross and early visited his sepulcher.

Her honor, her peculiar blessedness consisted in this, that she was chosen to be the mother of Jesus. As woman in Eve bore her part in the fall, so woman in Mary bore her part in giving birth to him who is the Redeemer of the world.

To the church she sustains no official relation whatever. Christ himself expressly disclaims all such human relationship in his kingdom. The moment he appears, she retires. A few allusions, and she vanishes from the scene. The apostles never once allude to her. She is put as entirely aside as if she never had existed. To those inspired men she is utterly un-

known in any other relation to the church than that of a simple believer, saved by the blood of Jesus Christ. There is nothing in the early records, nothing in the early fathers of the church for the first five centuries, which indicates that Mary was anything more than an honored member of the church. When an heretical sect attempted to exalt her into an object of worship in the fourth century, Aphiphanius denounced them and expressed the opinion of the whole church when he said, "The whole thing is foolish and strange, and is a device and deceit of the devil. Let Mary be in honor. Let the Lord be worshiped. Let no one worship Mary." It was not until after five centuries had passed that this monstrous and wicked sentiment began to show itself in the church. During the middle ages, when so many heathenish customs and rites were adopted, the worship of Mary, like the worship of Venus among the pagans, was introduced into the church. First they made her perfect, without a shadow of evidence, because it was becoming. Then they made her sinless at her birth, and this opinion was solemnly ordained by the Pope and his council in 1854 as a dogma of the Romish church, and all believers were bound to receive it. To show you a little the religious regard in which she is held in the south of Europe, I will quote a few of the titles given to her in a work by Liguori, whose authority no one who understands the subject will venture to question. She is called the Queen of Mercy; our Life; our only Refuge, Help and Asylum; the Propitiatory of the whole world—Queen of Heaven and Hell; our Protectress from the Divine Justice, and from the Devil; the Mediatrix of grace; the Dispenser of all grace; omni-

potent; the great Peacemaker; the throne prepared in mercy; the body of Salvation; the Mediatrix of angels; the Way and the Door; the Mediator; the Intercessor; the Advocate; the Redeemer; the Savior; she is invested with a title archetypal; with a crown of light as the morning star; a glory issuing from the eternal throne; robes pure as the heavens, and a scepter over all. I mention these things with shame and sorrow—shame to see to what heights of absurdity and blasphemy our poor human nature under seeming religious impulses can proceed, when once it sets its foot outside of the living word, and begins to add to that record its own inventions; sorrow that by multitudes, Jesus, the only Redeemer, should be practically discrowned and a feeble woman exalted to his throne. And I read with a new light, and a more fearful emphasis, the closing words of the Revelation: “And if any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues written in this book; and if any man shall take away from the words of this book, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.” May God keep our weak hearts from being led astray by human inventions; may he shed light upon the blinded multitudes from whose eyes these baseless imaginations hide the glorious mercy of Jesus and the bounteous love of God, and who feel that they need some mediator—some name by which they may be saved, other than the one mediator, the one name given under heaven by which all may be saved.

—Let us pass out of these mephitic shadows into the light of Christ’s own truth. It has been said that the

fact that Mary was the mother of Jesus has given to woman under the reign of Christ her exaltation, and lifted her above the degrading conditions to which the world at large had subjected her. I would not diminish the just influence of this fact. The thought is to me delightful that she was the mother and the nurse of Jesus, and by that association is forever honored. But, after all, the real power that has elevated the sex springs not from Mary, but from the very nature and genius of the kingdom of her divine Son. When he, refusing to recognize his earthly relationship, declared that whosoever did the will of his heavenly father, the same was his brother, and sister, and mother, then he struck the key-note of his divine system; then he proclaimed that in his kingdom there should be neither male nor female, bond nor free; that in his blessed family all should stand on the same level; all should enjoy the same privileges; all should be brethren and sisters united in Christian affection. This is the secret force that has emancipated and exalted woman. This has not indeed destroyed the distinctions of nature, but it has freed them from all sign of inferiority and degradation; it has given her an exalted position in the church of Christ as a minister of blessing—a co-worker with him in advancing his kingdom. This has consecrated while it has purified her tenderness, her emotions, her love, her intellect to the noble work of elevating man. Some ignoble souls there are who perpetually depreciate woman. The answer once given by one of a company thus employed is enough to silence them. “Gentlemen, I had a mother!” Yes! we have had mothers, and some of us will bless God forever for

their heavenly influence in refining our rude natures and drawing us to Jesus. Mothers, sisters here tonight, remember your high calling; remember that Jesus has put the crown on your head, and the scepter in your hand; that he has delivered you from the ferocious and degrading passions of man, and lifted you up to the heights of Zion, and strewn your path with his blessings. Oh! well may you believe in Jesus of Nazareth. Oh! well may you go to him as your dear brother and Lord amidst the sorrows and trials through which your earthly journey leads. Have you the faith, the love of Mary and Elizabeth? Have you that secret of strength which the divine word alone can impart? Can ye all look away from the vanities of earth, entranced by the glorious brightness which he sheds around the loving heart?

Is it possible that you can turn away from such divine love, from this friend of friends, to immerse yourselves in those fleeting pleasures which so soon must vanish and leave your soul desolate and dark forever? Yes! woman loved and followed Jesus. At Pilate's bar no voice of hers cried crucify him. In sorrow and tears she stood by his cross; with tender and loving hands she brought the precious and costly spices to embalm his lifeless body; with eager footsteps she hastened to his sepulcher with the opening light; with elevated faith and prayer she waited for the baptismal spirit, and ever since, Christ hath honored her in the church and used her influence to spread his light and love through the world. Joyfully she hath ministered to his disciples; exultingly she has braved the fires of martyrdom; and, mightier still, she has stood firm amidst the rushing tide of earthly attrac-

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tions, with her eye serenely fixed upon the cross, and her soul bathed in the light of heaven. Oh! daughter, sister, mother, will you turn your back on Jesus, when he is leading up these heights of light and love, when such illustrious example pleads with you to forsake your sins and bedew his blessed feet with your tears? Oh! woman, shall the Divine Son of Mary attract you not, while the world and sin shall lead you on to death?

## IV.

## THE WISE MEN.

*“Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judah, in the days of Herod the King, behold, there came wise men from the East to Jerusalem, saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him.”* Matthew ii, 1, 2.

Who were the Magi? “Historically, they are chiefly conspicuous as a Persian religious caste. Herodotus mentions them among the six tribes of the Medes.” In the Old Testament, they are presented to us as learned men, the counselors of kings, the interpreters of dreams, and especially informed in respect to matters of religion. After the conquest of the East by Alexander and the Romans, many of them migrated westward, and professed divination, sorcery, and a special familiarity with the secret powers of nature, if not an alliance with evil spirits. In the West, in consequence of these associations, the name was applied to designate a class at once “hateful and contemptible.” It is so used occasionally in the New Testament. In the East, however, they seem to have maintained their position for a long time as a body of men learned in religion and science. Astronomy was one of their studies, and astrology, or divination by the stars, was connected with it. These men were evidently of this class, and are to be distinguished from those strolling

sorcerers, who employed magic arts for gain, in the West. They are said to have come from the East—in all probability from Persia or Parthia, their original home. Their language is truthful and frank. Regarding their mission as at once dignified, important, and perfectly legitimate, they address themselves to Herod, the king of the country, as men accustomed to courts, and acquainted with the proper method of procedure in such circumstances. They came probably with a large retinue and considerable state. They came not for traffic, nor for gain, nor for an ordinary political purpose. Their object is higher and more noble. They came to see and present their offerings to the new-born king of the Jews. To ascertain where he is to be found, they have an interview with Herod himself. He summons the chief priests and scribes, men learned in the Law. They inform him that the Messiah is to be born in Bethlehem. Then Herod, with his usual craft, and concealing his real object, privately questions them respecting the time when the star appeared, sends them to Bethlehem, and enjoins it upon them to return, and inform him of the result. They proceed to Bethlehem, find the child, offering Him the usual royal gifts, gold, frankincense, and myrrh; then, warned of God, they return to their home by another way. This is the simple, short, unadorned narrative of this remarkable visit. In itself, it is direct, clear, and eminently truthful. The subsequent events—the anger of Herod, the murder of the young children of Bethlehem, the flight into Egypt—follow naturally from this visit, and are its consequence, connected logically as cause and effect. That such a narrative as this should be fictitious,

mythical, invented wholly out of nothing, is incredible. It never could have entered the brain of a sane man, unless, debauched by the spirit of unbelief, skeptical in regard to the supernatural in religion, he felt compelled, by the necessities of the case, to forge a theory that might remove this, in common with all the other remarkable facts of the life of Christ, out of the domain of history. The same method of procedure—for there is no logical sense in it—would make all history a lie, and the best authenticated facts of the past an illusion and a dream. To show the absurdities of these methods of our modern rationalists, Bishop Whately, taking their principles, has actually proved that Napoleon Bonaparte was a myth, and his whole history a falsehood, and that, when sound of the cannon of Waterloo had hardly ceased to echo around the walls of Brussels, over Europe.

Josephus does not mention these facts, neither does he allude to the crucifixion. It was his policy to depreciate Christianity, to flatter the Romans, and to avoid everything which would excite their suspicion, or the fears of the Emperor. Besides, among the vastly more exciting scenes which attended the last days of Herod, it is more than probable that these minor events were either unknown or forgotten. It is more remarkable that Luke, who dwells much on the early history of Christ, should have omitted all mention of it. But this is easily accounted for on these principles: 1. Luke seems to have his eye most directly on what concerns the humanity of Jesus, and so has recorded things connected with this, omitted by the other Evangelists; Matthew, on the other hand, is intent on his royal messiahship, and seizes readily

on all the events which, like this narrative, bear directly upon his kingship. 2. The sources from which each one drew the materials of his narrative are unknown to us. Facts which may have been accessible to one, may not have been to another. This is common to all histories, and the life of Christ is no exception to the general rule. 3. The grand principle, and the most important of all, is, that it was not the divine purpose to have the life of Christ written by a single mind, and thus stand singly by itself; but by different minds, selecting different facts, or grouping the same facts in different order, each according to his own mental habitudes, so as to afford in the result a more complete picture of the Savior, and at the same time, from their undesigned coincidences and diversities, place this life on the most impregnable basis. Now, this principle gives its peculiar character to the gospel histories; it accounts for all omissions, for the peculiar manner in which each one makes his own statement, for the abridged narrative of one in some parts and its fullness in another—it gives to each his proper position, and accounts for nine-tenths of all the difficulties, which an honest inquirer meets in the study of the gospels. Amidst the amazing wealth of these divine utterances, and the thousand miraculous deeds which Jesus performed, it would have been impossible to have given to us the whole, or, if given, they would have swelled the gospels into ponderous tomes, fit only for the shelves of the student's library, and not to be sent out and read by all the world—never there to be of any use. Selections from them would have had to be made by uninspired men for the people, while the commentaries

upon them would have filled more folios than those of the old lawyers on the civil law. The divine wisdom in the peculiar form of the gospels is revealing itself with wonderful brilliancy as time passes on. The essential things for the information of the world—the life of Jesus in its real power, as the gospel of redemption—are all there; available by all, sufficient for all, who in humble faith seek light on the way of salvation, and strive, by obedience to His commands, to live a life of faith, and attain final salvation. A great river, though it pass through the center of a continent, could not alone supply the wants of the millions that people it. The springs that gush up on every hillside, the little brooks that flow through every valley—these fertilize the earth, these supply the wants of individual men. The gospel, written in hundreds of volumes, like that river, would be accessible to few or to the many only at a vast expense of time and means. The gospel as it is, copied, printed, on the table of every house, in the pocket of every believer, is the same pure spring of the water of life, at every man's door, and he may drink and live forever, while the confluence of the life it nourishes in individuals forms the mighty stream of Christianity that is to encompass the world.

We come now to speak of two points in this narrative, which will occupy us for the remainder of this discussion. The first is the conduct of Herod, and its historic probability. Herod was of an Idumean family, from a captured Jewish province on the south of Palestine. Nominally a Jew, he was in heart a Philistine, as his family are said to have been originally. Early placed in power, he evinced considerable genius

as a general and executive. Bold in his designs, artful, unscrupulous, and decisive in executing them, he was successful in winning the favor of Rome, and maintaining his authority over a discontented people. His throne was a usurpation; the Asmonean dynasty he had crushed with a bloody hand. To propitiate the favor of the people, chafing under the loss of their ancient kings, and to aggrandize his own government, he enlarged and beautified the Temple, and adorned Jerusalem with splendid edifices. In moral character, he reached the summit of infamy. Ambitious to the last degree, rapacious, cruel, the slave of hateful passions, jealous, and irascible, he hesitated at no means to accomplish his purposes. With a remorseless hand he sacrificed alike the noble and the base, the innocent and the guilty, when they stood in the path of his ambition or his lust. His deeds of blood-thirsty vengeance among the noblest of the people rival those of Caesar Borgia, and put to the blush a Richard the Third. In his own family, the glow of natural and social affection was quenched in blood by the insane jealousy of this incarnate demon. His own house became a slaughter-pen, and his beautiful wife, Marianne, and his children were the chosen victims. His wife, the granddaughter of a Jewish king, and whom he loved as tenderly as his capricious and jealous heart could love, twice, when he went to Rome, he destined by secret orders to death, in case he should not return. About this very time, he had murdered his son Antipater, and during the illness under which he was suffering, and of which he soon after died, he left orders that, in the event of his death, all

the nobles of Jerusalem should be slain, in order that Jerusalem might be compelled to mourn over his departure. It was to such a man the wise men came with the inquiry, "Where is he who is born king of the Jews?" It is no wonder that the jealous, ambitious heart of this monster was troubled. His throne and that of his descendants was in danger. With his usual craft, he instantly formed his plans. Cloaking his purpose under a desire to see and worship this royal child, he ascertains the time when his star appeared, and then enjoins it upon them to return and inform him where he is to be found. And when they do not return, then he issues orders to slay every child in Bethlehem under two years of age. Given the character and position of Herod; given the suspicion that a child is born in Bethlehem who is to thrust him or his children from the throne, and the massacre of the innocents follows as fitly as any effect from a natural cause. For him not to have taken the course he did, would have belied his whole character and life. Josephus says: "That Herod did not spare those who seemed most dear to him, but slew all those of his own family who sided with the Pharisees in refusing to take the oath of allegiance to the Roman Emperor, while they looked forward to *a change in the royal line.*" Macrobius, another historian, has preserved this characteristic anecdote of Augustus. When he heard that among the boys of two years old Herod had ordered to be slain, one of his own sons was a victim, he said, "that he had rather be Herod's hog than his son." We are startled and amazed at the depths of depravity to which this man descended. He may indeed have won a peculiar infamy, but he does not

stand isolated and alone in all these respects in the world's history. The sultans of Turkey, for ages, systematically slew all their nearest and dearest kindred who might possibly thrust them from the throne. There is scarcely in Europe, or the world, a royal house of any long standing, against which the voice of crime, monstrous and unnatural, does not cry to God for vengeance. Selfish ambition, the spirit of a selfish aggrandizement, with fit opportunity for its development, and uncounteracted by religious principle, is among the mightiest influences to debauch the manhood of its possessor, and curse the world. It has turned patriots into traitors; men of a gentle and kindly nature, into the most ferocious and cruel. Unscrupulous in the means it uses, it treads upon the rights and hearts of the people, as if they were beasts of prey. Nine-tenths of all the wars which have desolated the earth have sprung from its selfish lust of aggrandizement. It marches with fire and sword through peaceful and populous provinces, utterly insensible to the pleadings of innocence or the agony of broken hearts. It plunged this peaceful nation into all the terrors of civil conflict, and slew hundreds of thousands of your sons on its bloody altar. Alike in all ages, among all peoples, its presence is seen in every village and city of our land. It makes the proud man court the favor of those he despises; the moral man pander to the appetites of the depraved, that he may use them as stepping-stones to power. It ascends the steps of the capitol; it waves its wand; governors, representatives, senators, presidents, are transformed. The consistent man denies his principles; the honorable man debases himself to mean

and degrading acts; the clear intellect, the ingenuous mind, that once looked straight into the eye of truth and right, sees only a huge figure of his own personality looming up in the future. This fearful passion, which made Herod a fiend, Arnold a traitor, and Napoleon a despot—which has shed blood enough to float all the navies of the world since Noah built his ark—lurks in you and me; is part and parcel of our depravity; to be repented of in dust, to be fully counteracted and changed into a healthful stimulus toward noble objects, only by the indwelling grace and transforming power of this royal child, whom Herod sought to destroy among the infants of Bethlehem.

The second point to be discussed relates to the star which guided these men to Bethlehem, and the reason which led them to seek out the infant Jesus. 1. To account for the appearance of this star, several theories have been advanced. Many of our modern commentators have been disposed to adopt the opinion of the astronomer, Kepler, that it was a conjunction of planets. He observed such a conjunction of the planets Saturn and Jupiter in the autumn of 1603, and in the following spring Mars was added to them. In the autumn of 1604, a new star of remarkable brilliancy appeared, which soon began to fade, and finally vanished. Calculating backward, he found a similar conjunction of these planets three times, in the year of Rome 747 and 748. They were so near, that to an imperfect vision they might seem as one. Alford, assuming this to be the case, then shows that if the Magi saw the first of these conjunctions, it would appear to them on the 20th of May, in the east, shortly

before the rising of the sun. If they then set out on their journey, and occupied five months in it, they would reach Jerusalem about the time of the conjunction in November. If they left Jerusalem in the evening, these stars, in the sign Pisces, would be before them in the direction of Bethlehem, coming to the meridian about 8 o'clock. Prof. Addison Alexander, one of the ripest scholars of this century, and one remarkably distrustful of mere theories, says of this: "The concurrence is in this case so remarkable, and the explanation recommended by such high scientific authority, that it would probably have been universally adopted, but for the foregone conclusion that the birth of Christ took place in a different year. But that assumption is so doubtful, and the views of the best writers so discordant, that it can scarcely be allowed to decide the question before us, but may rather be decided by it." Another theory is founded on the fact that in some Chinese astronomical records it is affirmed that a luminous body or comet appeared in 749 and 750 at Rome. This would accord with the more general opinion as to the time of Christ's birth. Others again, rejecting these theories, think "that the whole tenor of Matthew's narrative points strongly to some extraordinary luminous appearance in the form of a star, which, having served its purpose of guiding the Magi to Jesus, vanished forever." The first two theories explain the appearance of the star according to natural laws; the last makes it wholly supernatural. On this subject I offer the following remarks: 1st. There is nothing in the narrative before us which necessitates the supposition of a supernatural phenomenon. It simply states the fact, and leaves every

one free to form his own conclusions. 2d. Where a fact is stated which might have occurred in virtue of natural law—and there is nothing in the statement contrary to this idea—then we are bound to suppose it did thus occur. God does not go outside of nature, to do that which he can do as well in accordance with nature. 3d. The fact that it was natural or supernatural, does not account for the connection of this star with the new-born king in the mind of the Magi. If this could be effected as well by an extraordinary conjunction of stars or a comet, then there would be no necessity for the creation of a special star. After all, the narrative is so framed as to leave every one free to form his own opinion of the character of this remarkable phenomenon; nor does it become any one to dogmatize in the matter.

But the main question now meets us, and demands an answer. It is not whether this star was an extraordinary natural phenomenon or a special luminous appearance created expressly for this purpose, but how in either case it came to be connected with the birth of Jesus in the minds of these Magi, and how it was they were led to take so deep an interest in a King of the Jews, as to take this journey in order to present to him their royal offerings, and do him homage. This is evidently the chief question, and to the solution of it we must now address ourselves. It is clear from this narrative that in the minds of these men a more than usual interest attached to the birth of this infant. It is no ordinary King of the Jews whose star they have seen. Judea is but a speck on the map of the world. Its kings had risen and disappeared, unnoticed by the surrounding nations; even

now the shadow of that vast empire, that had changed nearly all the kingdoms of the civilized world into subject provinces, rests upon it. It was the smallest, and in the opinion of men, one of the least important of the kingdoms. Why should these men, dwelling in distant and hostile regions, be deeply moved by the birth of one of its future kings, and journey hundreds of miles to offer their royal homage to the infant in its cradle? The case is most extraordinary—most wonderful. It is all out of the common course of things. It can be explained only on the supposition that this infant was to be no ordinary king; that his influence and his rule was to extend far beyond the petty province of Judea; that all the nations of the world were, in some way, to feel his influence and recognize his sovereignty; that he was to stand out in history as the most remarkable of kings; that even the empire of the Cæsars was to bow to his influence, and the world to behold a king of a new order, of high and noble attributes, guided even by the divine hand, ascend the throne. Such ideas as these must have filled the minds of these eastern sages; such thoughts must have kindled their enthusiasm, and moved them to make this most extraordinary visit to Bethlehem. How, then, came they to entertain such views and associate them with the infant Jesus? This opens to us a wide field of inquiry, and one as yet only partially investigated, but every step in which is full of deepest interest—every step in which sheds new light on that wonderful providence of God which prepared the nations for the coming of Immanuel.

The promise made right after the fall of a Savior who should bruise the serpent head of sin, was not

wholly latent and inoperative. A central idea like this, so grand, so universal, once lodged in the minds of men, was not likely to vanish entirely away. Distorted, dimly apprehended, misconceived it might be, but in many a thoughtful mind it passed down from Noah, and in every nation it would find those who cherished it as a prophecy of some undefined good, to be realized in the appearance of some one who should stand in relation to redemption as Adam had to the fall. The institution of sacrifices was the expression of this idea in a symbolical form. For they were based on the truth that man by sin had forfeited his life, and that only by blood could he be redeemed. But the blood of bulls or of goats could not possibly secure the remission of sin. Cæsar, himself a free-thinker, says that for the life of man, the life of man must be offered, since only thus could the immortal gods be appeased. Sacrifices were thus a standing memorial of the fall; a proof of man's utter inability by himself to atone for sin; a perpetual prophecy of the coming of Him in whom the symbol should find its substance—in whom sin should find its true sacrifice, and man should find access to a pardoning God. And, in addition to this, the felt want of one whose words should enlighten men on the vast concerns of the soul, and whose power should deliver them from the indwelling power of sin, naturally inspired the hope of such a deliverer, and helped to perpetuate the prophecy of Eden in thoughtful minds. Thus Socrates labored, as he says, to be a helper of men to be new born, to rise above the power of sin; thus Plato affirmed that, in order to enlighten and deliver man from sin, some one must be sent from heaven. All

unconsciously did these men echo the original promise given to Adam; all unconsciously did they prophesy, out of the heart of our distressed humanity, of one who in the likeness of man incarnate should wield divine power to purify the heart and lift man up to communion with God. I might multiply indefinitely testimonies on this subject from all the religions of the world. I might show you how Zoroaster and his followers anticipated the coming of such a deliverer; how in the far East the same thought holds its place; how Sibyline oracles in the West shadowed it forth, so that it was no figure of speech, no exaggeration of a fact, and no figment of the imagination, when the sacred writers call Christ the desire of all nations. Archbishop Trench, in one series of his Hulsean lectures, has followed out this thought at great length; yet even he has not begun to exhaust it. It is a mine into which many a learned man will sink his shaft hereafter, and out of the depths of the religions of the world bring forth still mightier testimonies to the divine preparations for the coming of Messiah.

But the great influence which breathed new life into these traditions and memories of the nations respecting a Messiah, which gave a definite form to those longings and unconscious prophecies of the heathen, sprang in the age immediately preceding this from Judea itself. The wonderful providence which scattered multitudes abroad over the world, not only rooted out the tendencies to idolatry in themselves, but intensified and quickened their estimate of and love for their own Scriptures. The love of country on one side, the amazing purity and sublimity

of their sacred writings contrasted with the debasing superstitions of the pagans on the other, exalted their enthusiasm for their own religion, impelled them to study their prophets with profounder zeal, compelled them to dwell on the coming and glories of their Messiah, and to anticipate the hour as near when Jerusalem should be exalted above the mountains, when all nations should flow to her, when Greek and Roman and Oriental should bow to the scepter of her king, and they should be the nobility and their priests the hierarchy of the world. For this they prayed; with these sublime voices their synagogues resounded every Sabbath day. These voices were heard by multitudes without. They were the fit expressions of distressed and longing hearts. They found an answering echo in many a thoughtful mind. They were heard in the palaces of kings, in the libraries of the learned. They raised expectation; they excited curiosity. So that Tacitus at Rome is compelled to recognize them; Virgil immortalizes them in song, but applies them to a child of Rome. All over the West, the expectation is that in the East a king is to arise who shall rule the world; all over the East, the expectation is that in the West he is to be born. Jerusalem is the center, and there Messiah appears.

These Magi were thoughtful men. They shared in these expectations of this coming king. They may have been in personal connection with the Jews, and learned more definitely of the Messiah; for Daniel, the chief of these men at the court of Babylon, must have left his impress upon them, while multitudes of the dispersion were still scattered through all that region. But they were astrologers; they constantly

connected the birth of great men and important events with the stars. No matter if the science was false. They acted on what seemed to them to be true. And it is all folly to suppose that God may not make even the errors of men the occasion for accomplishing His purposes. In expectation of this great event they waited and watched. The star appears. To them it is the star of Bethlehem. Then, like others, they might have recorded it and waited the result. But no; there is an inward impulse which urges them toward Jerusalem. Here is the finger of God. Who that believes that God works in human hearts by influences and in ways known only to Himself denies it? How often in the world's history do men feel these unaccountable impulses, overriding all obstacles and leading them forth to action? How often are men thus affected and saved by it from some great calamity on which they were unknowingly rushing? What Christian but who recognizes this inward influence that has turned his feet away from the path that would have led to misery and death? God designed the visit of these men to the infant Savior. It was connected with Herod and with the flight into Egypt and the deliverance of Jesus. And it was His influence, and His alone, that brought them on their toilsome journey to pay their offerings to our King Immanuel. It was no accidental conjunctive circumstance, no mere mistake in respect to the stars and their language and meaning, that brought them to Judea. It was all arranged in the divine mind, and was part of that sublime plan of which the incarnation was the beginning of the end. The neighing of a horse once decided who should occupy a throne.

The destiny of a nation often hinges on events as slight as that. But above them all God rules. The mistakes, the errors of men are all known to Him. His providence reaches to them, foresees them, uses them to advance His final purpose in respect to this world. That star, that conjunction of stars, had an office to perform in reference to the infant Jesus; and God used it to bring about this visit of the wise men to his cradle. The connection between it and the birth of Christ may not have been what they imagined, but it was real in God's purpose and fulfilled its office. So in a thousand ways God subordinates man's mistakes to the advancement of His kingdom. It is His sublime prerogative to bring good out of evil, and out of error to bring forth the more perfect knowledge of and establishment of His truth. Thus out of alchemy comes the beautiful science of chemistry—a science which, analyzing the composite nature of all material things, is revealing new wonders of divine wisdom, long hidden from the eye of man, and multiplying his resources for advancement all over the earth. Thus out of war, with all its savage ferocity, has sprung the law of nations, which one day may become the law of harmony when Christ shall have breathed into them more perfectly his spirit. And thus out of astrology came the sublime science of astronomy, introducing man into that universe of worlds which nightly holds its silent march around our planet. We might illustrate this thought from every department of knowledge and religion, and we should see how God is thus making error contribute to truth, and the transient misconceptions of sincere inquirers, the fore-runners of still higher advances.

It was peculiarly fitting that these foreign Magi should lay their offerings at the feet of Jesus. Angels had heralded him; devout Jews had recognized him, and now in them the Gentile world presented its homage to him who was to be their God. For that world he was to live and die; his words were to give light to the nations and scatter their darkness; his life and death were to be their salvation.

It was fitting, too, that science, in the persons of these scholars, should stand humbly at the cradle of Jesus and bend its head in lowly reverence. For he was incarnate wisdom; the light that blazed from Calvary was mighty to scatter a thousand superstitions which science had essayed in vain. He was to make man conscious of his immortality, and reveal to him the nature and wisdom of God in all its sublime comprehensiveness. He was to pierce the darkness of the grave, and bring life and immortality to light. He, lifting man above the mephitic gloom of things earthly, bringing down into the soul the elevating truths of true religion, was to give impulse and guidance to the human mind in the study of the works of God, and the providence of God, and the laws that rule in matter and mind, that should make the future all resplendent with light. Of all this, Christ is the center and God the circumference. Science, to be real and advancing, must start from Calvary and get its true impulse from the cross, and make the Bible its inspiration, and then bring back its trophies and lay them humbly at the feet of Jesus.

One thought more and I have done. These Magi were men, sinful men, groping in darkness, longing for light, for truth, for deliverance from sin. The

heavens above them were studded with stars. They looked upon them and studied them, but the darkness still encompassed them; the soul still longed for a guide to immortality. But when this star rose upon them heralding the sun, with impulsive, eager footsteps they hurried to Bethlehem and recognized their king. They came to Jesus and were blest. That toilsome journey issued in the most glorious event of their lives. That sincere act of homage God approved; he gave them special manifestations of his presence, and taught them how to return. They brought gold and precious spicery as the expression of their homage to the infant king; they carried back with them a spiritual benison in comparison with which the riches of earth are as dust and ashes. They came as inquirers to the most wonderful teacher in the world, and they carried away thoughts and impressions that would quicken their love and deepen their faith all through life. When the storms came, they saw through the gloom the star of Bethlehem. We hear no more of them, for their mission to Christ was accomplished. But we may suppose, that if they survived to see the hour when that infant was crucified, and when his disciples, entering Mesopotamia, and Babylon, and Persia, preached a risen Savior, these devout men would listen to the first words of message. It would come to them as the explanation of the mystery and the glory that compassed that royal infant, and, lifting their eyes from earthly kings to Jesus on God's right hand, they saw in him their Redeemer and their incarnate God.

You, too, are walking in darkness, seeking some guide to immortality. Stars of nature shine down upon you, but they are cold, and distant, and decep-

tive. Long have some of you been following earthly guides. In vain. In vain. One star alone heralds the sun that is to shed the light of immortality upon your perturbed and anxious spirits. So Kirke White watched and waited in darkness, tossed on the unquiet waves of earthly passions, and no harbor of rest opened its glad quiet and its sunlit skies to his soul. His passionate nature broke forth in song; he ranged through all the realm of literature; he ascended the heights of human science, but the wind still roared; the waves still dashed around his frail bark. Then when despair had settled on his heart, he saw a star, this star of Bethlehem. It guided him home to rest, to peace, to light, to God. Oh! thus have millions, journeying through the desert, looked to the stars around for some guide to an immortal rest. Out of that trackless waste no certain star shone in which they could recognize the true guide. They followed now one and then another, but no city of light and rest lifted its walls and pinnacles of beauty and glory before them. The night was on them and no morning came. Then they saw the star of Bethlehem; then came the glorious sun of righteousness, and then at length they reached that city whose builder and maker is God.

And now, dear friends, what will you do? Will you go with us reverently to pay your homage to the infant Jesus? We'll go with you. Come with us in penitence and faith and go to Calvary. Will you watch with us at the sepulcher? Will you on Mount Olivet see Jesus ascend to his seat of power? Will you sit praying with us in the place of prayer, waiting the baptism of the spirit? Will you go forth with us to bear the cross of Jesus and proclaim his

gospel to the perishing and ignorant? Will you walk with us in the joyous and blessed company of our Savior? Will you with us enter the gates of death, sustained by faith in him who makes those gates the portals of life? Will you enter with us those heavenly mansions he hath prepared for all his people? The spirit and the bride say come, and let him that heareth say come, and whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely.

## V.

## WHO TAUGHT JESUS?

*“And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man.”—Luke ii, 52.*

*“Whence hath this man this wisdom?”—Matthew xiii, 54.*

*“How knoweth this man letters, having never learned? Jesus answered them, and said, My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me.”—John vii, 15, 16.*

MORE than eighteen centuries ago, the traveler who visited Nazareth might have seen a youth quietly passing through its streets, or climbing the hills on the sides of which it is built, to gaze on the magnificent panorama which, from that, embraces the Mediterranean on the west, the great plains of Esdralon and the hills of Judea on the south, Tiberias and the mountains beyond it on the east, and Lebanon and snow-crowned Hermon on the north. A little later he might have entered the carpenter's shop of Joseph and seen him there working as a mechanic at his reputed father's trade. This youth is distinguished from all around him by his manly grace and beauty, and especially by his countenance, radiant with the calm spirituality of his pure nature. Galilee, in which he dwells, contains a mixed population of Phœnicians and Jews, proverbially uncultivated and rude. Nazareth, in Galilee, is pre-eminent for its boisterous and

unenlightened population. No molding influence of Grecian intelligence was known to it. No teacher of the law from Jerusalem condescended to take up his abode there. Nestled in that quiet valley, apart from the influences of the great world, it maintained its bad pre-eminence in ignorance among the towns of Palestine. The question, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth," gives a wonderful significance to the title which Pilate wrote on the cross, "Jesus of *Nazareth*, king of the Jews."

In these rude circumstances, his mind unaffected by the discipline of the schools of Athens or Jerusalem, he grows from childhood to youth, from youth to manhood. An occasional visit with his parents to Jerusalem, to celebrate the great feasts, is all the intercourse he has with the outer world. But when the full maturity of manhood is reached, this young man emerges from the vale of Nazareth and presents himself to his countrymen as the Messiah, and stands forth a perfect teacher of the sublimest truths. For three years he speaks and writes as never man before or since has taught or wrought; then, dying on Calvary, he rises from the grave and ascends to heaven. The system of truth he taught and illustrated in his life, wherever it has gone, wherever it is received, elevates man into a higher region of knowledge and life. It became the inspiration of millions; it overturned the religions of heathenism; it introduced a new era of progress; it has grown stronger in the numbers who accept it from year to year; it moves forward to the conquest of the world. Whence did he derive that truth? How came he to be informed with such knowledge? How comes it to pass that this young

man, reared in such adverse circumstances, in the short space of three years, has done that which all the greatest intellects of the world, trained in the finest schools, working their protracted lives, have been utterly unable to approximate unto, so that in comparison with him and his work they are as babbling infants to the angel standing in the sun! But in order to show you the absolutely immeasurable difference between Christ and all other teachers, and to justify more fully the answer which must be given to these questions, I ask you to consider with me his peculiar character as a teacher, and the character of the truths he uttered.

1. Christ as a teacher condenses and combines all that is true, real, and important for man to know in all the religions of the world. There is nothing vital and permanent in any system of faith, nothing in them that is essential to human elevation or spiritual progress, that is not to be found in the teachings of Christ in form free from all error and infinitely better adapted to bless man. Truth has always been in the world; God gave man a revelation of it to a certain extent at the first. His conscience responded to it; the law was written on his heart. But his passions were antagonistic, and often got the better of conscience. They obscured the truth; they led men to mix it with error, to substitute imaginations and human reasonings in its place. Once in a while a devout soul, with fine powers of thought, seized upon isolated portions of it and proclaimed it anew, and taught it to a circle of disciples. They in turn added to it something of their own, distorted it, obscured it. And thus the truth was only here and there a grain

of gold in the midst of sand and rubbish. The fair system of truth was broken up. Isolated fragments only remained, and those welded into systems of monstrous error and superstition. Then Christ arose. Out of the mind of this Galilean peasant it came forth, the pure gold, stamped with his image, to be the spiritual currency of the world. The error, the imagination, the superstition have vanished. Refined of its dross; bright in its pure luster; henceforth the world recognizes it as his truth—as the truth of God. It is here; it is in Europe; it is spreading over the world in its original, pristine purity. Whence came it? How is it that he alone in all history, unlearned in human philosophies, unlearned in human religions, unveils the truth of God in all its perfection, undimmed by a particle of the dross of error? Who is this being who thus walks in heaven's own brightness—whose utterances are the utterances of God himself out of that region of light where there is no darkness at all? Who is this whose words no mind, however great, can add to, can take from, without marring their beauty and their vitality? Who is this whose eye, glancing through history, and into man, and up to God, detects all that is pure, and real, and vital in the past and present, and, separating it from all that is impure or doubtful, stamps it as God's pure truth, and gives it currency forever?

2. Jesus unfolded the true nature of the Mosaic economy, and brought out the true spirit of the doctrines and precepts of the Old Testament Scriptures. His conceptions of the Mosaic economy were radical, clear, and definite. The Jews, without an exception, regarded this system as permanent. It was divinely

appointed; it was designed to exalt and purify their nation; it was meant ultimately to bless other nations; but this blessing was to reach the world at large only through them; the Gentiles were to come to them for light; but they were to be the favored nation; Jerusalem was to be exalted above the hills; they were to be the nobles, and Messiah the king of the world; the same ritual, the same civil statutes were to continue, everything was to proceed in the same general course; but their influence was to diffuse itself and leaven the heathen. The glory that was to rest on Zion was temporal, and Messiah was to rule as a civil as well as a religious king over all men. This view all their great and learned men supported. There is no evidence that a single one of them all entertained a different opinion. But Christ, when he entered upon his Messianic work, propounded a view entirely antagonistic to this. He declared that this whole system was only educational, and preparatory to another and a grander system which he announced. Its ceremonial, its provincial, its purely national arrangements were all to pass away. Jerusalem was no longer to be the center of worship. The Mosaic system was only the chrysalis in which the church was prepared to assume another and nobler, a more universal, form. Nay, he advanced beyond this; he not only announced that this was the real purpose of that ancient system, but he affirmed that in *him personally* it had reached its fulfillment. He was the appointed Messiah, whose reign was to be spiritual, universal, eternal. In him types and prophecy were to have their fulfillment. He was to break the shell of the chrysalis, and the imprisoned church, now ripe in the fullness of time, was to spread its

wings for a world-wide conquest. Think a moment, how radical, how sweeping, how practical, was this announcement! The distinctive characteristics of this nation were to be obliterated at a blow; its religious institutes divinely established; cemented by blood; consecrated by ages of devotion; associated with all that was good, and grand, and inspiring in the past; the crown and glory of the whole people; to sustain which, patriotism and religion united; the perpetuation of which alone could exalt them as a nation among nations, and kindle their enthusiasm, and breathe into them the inspiration of hope—were all to be swept away forever. Do you wonder now at the intense antagonism which they instinctively felt toward Jesus, and which so soon culminated in the cry—"Crucify him! Crucify him!"

But this is not all. While he swept away the Mosaic economy as a national and preparatory system, he unveils the true spirit which breathes through it the precious truths and holy doctrines which lay at its foundation, and gave it all its vitality. These were the spiritual forces that maintained the life of true religion; these were the truths which were permanent and eternal; these must enter into his new kingdom of righteousness and peace. At this time the nation as a whole was settling into a rigid formalism. Two schools of somewhat different tendencies were training the people for this sad eclipse of true faith. One, represented by the Pharisees, and by far the largest and most powerful, professed to receive not only the Law and the Prophets as inspired, but with these a multitude of traditions as almost of equal authority. They held the truth, but it was so overlaid with these often

puerile, absurd, and contradictory traditions, as to obscure, distort, and practically nullify it. Some of you may have seen what is called a palimpsest—that is, an old parchment on which the original writing has been rubbed over, and something else written on it. Thus the Pharisees, like the Church of Rome, had written their traditions all over the original word of God, so that man lost sight of it. But when Jesus came, he denounced their whole traditional system; he rubbed it out, and restored the original word just as inspiration wrote it. He tore the masks from their faces, and denounced them as corrupters of the truth; and held up before men the simple word in its original integrity and purity as the true and only guide to life. This man, confronting the most powerful sect of his countrymen, and the masses who sympathized with them, restored the word of God to its true place.

The other school, represented by the Sadducees, professed to hold only to the Mosaic law, and to this mainly as a civil and moral code. They lost sight of its true, profound, religious significance. They were afraid to step their foot into the spiritual world. Their religion was outward and material. They professed to be led by reason. They not only rejected tradition, but heart religion itself. They left the word of God as dry and barren and juiceless as a squeezed orange. Their religion was art, and taste, and literature, and intellectual refinement. They were the infidels of that age, as they would have been the rationalists of this. Jesus deals with them, too. He points out to them the profound spirituality, the vital meaning in the word which they overlooked. He brought forth before both these classes the intense spirit of religion

which pervaded and vitalized every part of it. He scattered the superstitions of the one and the skepticism of the other with the same breath. He revealed the fundamental system of truth which was in the Old Testament and which they either misconceived or doubted. And thus he affirmed all that which was permanent and abiding, aside from the forms and ceremonies, the types and the civil statutes. Thus this youth of Nazareth comprehends what no mortal before him or since understood; he holds in his mind an original conception of the whole Old Testament dispensation; he takes in at a glance the truth that was designed for educational preparation; the truth that is essential to all religion and is eternal. He scatters the fog of tradition and the darkness of skepticism. He stands up as in himself the fulfillment of all that is temporary and the vital center of all that is permanent and spiritual, and the result justifies his wisdom. The law, which he pronounced evanescent and temporary, is gone forever; its mission is accomplished, and it remains to us as only as the luminous history of that stage of the church, shedding light on the providence and wondrous wisdom of God in the training of this nation. But what he made permanent, remains and enters into our experience as Christians. See now how grandly, under his wonderful tuition, the old text harmonizes with the new—how the old is illuminated by the new, and the new is connected with the old as part of one sublime system, animated by one spirit, originated by one mind, and unitedly filling up the circle of truth for the salvation of men. When I read the Old Testament in the light of the New, I seem not to be passing into another atmosphere or another

region of thought ; it is the same ; the same God, the same Savior in prophecy, the same Christian life and experience. When I read the New, I see in it only a fulfillment of the Old ; the same system more fully developed ; the same truth set forth in clear light ; and I clasp this whole Bible to my heart as the living Word of God, all of it profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for instruction, for edification in righteousness. Now how did it come to pass that this young Nazarene stood so immensely above all his predecessors and contemporaries ? How did the fullness of this vast scheme, known only to the mind of God, only partially shadowed forth in the Old Testament, possess his intellect as defined, clear and comprehensive as if he had stood at the fountain-head of wisdom and himself originated it ? Whence did he derive that transcendent insight which detects the transient and the permanent, the substance in the form, the entire relations of this sublime scheme to God, to the Jewish nation, to universal man ? Nay, more ; how came he, a youth, of lowly parentage, with no prestige of scholarship, or wealth, or station, to make himself the grand object of all the transient arrangements of the Mosaic economy ? To assume a character the most exalted and the most important in the world ? Answer me these questions, ye who believe only in natural law and the ordinary development of the human mind under the conditions essential to the progress of all other intellects ? What are the natural conditions necessary to develop such a mind ? Or can you conceive of any human being in the circumstances in which Christ was placed, solely from himself, originating such

thoughts and fixing them as a blazing sun in the heavens to shed light upon the world?

3. Passing now to another point; see with what wonderful vividness he presents old doctrines only dimly apprehended, and advances new truths! He proclaims the fatherhood of God, in terms the most remarkable and comprehensive. God is not merely a sovereign, but a father, feeling a father's interest in all his intelligent creation; loving them with God-like intensity; not the Jew only, but the Gentile; not a class, but the race. Hear that wonderful announcement: God so loved the *world* as to give his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but have everlasting life! This is the most sublime, most loving, most divine truth, the ages have ever heard. This is the brightest illustration of God's fatherhood, and the mightiest appeal to the hearts of men, seen or heard in all the centuries. It is a sublime revelation of love flashed down amid the depravities, and misconceptions, and hatreds, and darkness of the race. Our father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, is the seraphic opening of that comprehensive prayer he taught his disciples. Our father, thy father, my father, to whom as a child I may come, in all my want and sorrow. See, too, how he dignifies the soul! with what infinite value he invests it! how, beside it, the wealth of time, the glory of material things, suns, stars, the whole universe of nature fades, vanishes in the darkness of utter emptiness! See how the human heart is set forth as the temple of God or devils; the true throne of God, the usurped seat of Satan. Forms are nothing, earthly distinctions are nothing, intellectual attainments are nothing, the

heart, where right or wrong, love or selfishness, holiness or sin originate and live, and give man his true character for eternity—this is all in all.

Then how sin and holiness are set forth—sin in its guilt, its horrible pollution, its intrinsic evil, the only evil in the universe; holiness in its purity, its harmony, its blessedness, likening man to God, and fitting him for heaven. Sin is damnation; holiness is salvation. The new birth through which all must pass; the holy spirit, the regeperator, the comforter, the guide, the ever-present divine assistant; the self-denials, the crosses to be endured and taken up in the Christian life; the strait gate, the narrow way, and all their cognate ideas connected with man's deliverance from sin, how bright, clear, defined, they appear in his teachings! And then, behold! how the divine disposition to forgive sin in the repentant sinner is made real, intense, practical! The parable of the prodigal son; what a picture of divine, ineffable love, tenderness, mercy to the ruined yet penitent child has he painted for the world to look upon! And what a world of meaning is condensed into its crown of thought—there is joy in the presence of God, among the angels of heaven, over one sinner that repenteth! Oh! ye philosophers, ye prophets, ye poets, ye theologians of all the ages, who of ye ever gave to man such living revelations of divine forgiveness as this youth of Nazareth? Can we wonder that the heart of all the good on earth and in heaven throbs at the name of Jesus, when he illustrates in his own person such mercy as this! For here we must ascend Calvary to see this truth realized in action, revealed in agony, when he, as the Lamb of God, became a sacrifice for

the sins of man, and henceforth altars and priests and brute victims give place to the cross as the altar, and Jesus as priest and victim to atone for man. Then right alongside of this unspeakable love, see how he unveils the future world; how he paints retribution; sin in its final ruin; the sorrow awaiting the sinner who rejects and despises God's mercy; the torment, the worm that never dies, the fire that never shall be quenched; and how he draws aside the veil that hides the glory of heaven, and immortality, holiness ineffable, burst upon us; Dives in hell; Lazarus in Abraham's bosom, and the inexpressible pity of the saved patriarch—Son, remember! remember! These are scenes transcending the highest heaven of human invention. These are truths which only he who dwelt in the highest heaven of divine thought could thus unfold. Then comes the resurrection; those words, I am the resurrection and the life, echoing in hope over the dear Christian dust, and opening to the sorrowing heart reunions in glory, when we too shall be no longer dwellers here. But time would fail me to speak of all these teachings; to tell you how he taught that love and unselfish devotion to man is the golden life of his followers and the inspiration that is to save the lost; and how all these truths constitute harmonious parts of one great system, men saw not, men felt not, till he revealed them in all their completeness.

4. I ask you now to notice the universality and vitality of Christ's teachings. Everywhere he lays down principles that pertain to God and man in all time. There is nothing one-sided, nothing partial, nothing incomplete. Christianity is the universal religion. Its foundation and superstructure are built

for all men. Take his conception of the kingdom of heaven ; it is not of this world ; if it were, it would of necessity be local and partial. It is spiritual, and hence universal. Worship is not local ; it may be rendered as truly in the log cabin of a frontier settler, as in Jerusalem with its magnificent temples. Places are not sacred ; wood and stone are not holy ; the heart of man is God's temple. Whenever a soul cries to him Abba, Father, there is acceptable worship and an accepted worshiper. Take his conception of the brotherhood of man ; it is not family ; it is not the nation ; it is not color ; it is simply humanity. Just so his idea of brotherhood in the church. Whosoever believeth in me, the same is my brother, mother, and sister. All ye are brethren. Or look at the conditions of pardon and acceptance with God. It is not go to Mecca, to Jerusalem, Rome ; it is not offer sacrifice in this place or that ; it is not go wash in Jordan or the Tiber ; it is not receive absolution at the hands of a mere mortal like yourselves ; but simply *repent* and *believe*. Now repentance and faith are universal. They are exercises which any man and all men in all places may put forth. And thus I might carry you through all the teachings of Christ, and you would see in them all how the adventitious, the local are lost sight of, while the everywhere true, important, and essential are alone held forth. The gospel is a code of fundamental principles, based on the idea of a spiritual and universal kingdom. It was designed for all men, and its parts like the work of God are exactly fitted for this end. His last command is universal. Go preach my gospel to every creature. It is not go preach a particular form of church government, but just this : Proclaim this transcendent

evangel of peace and love, of faith and hope, of repentance and salvation, to all nations. My gospel is the air which all men must breathe; the water all men must drink; the true bread all men must eat if they would live forever. Now, my friends, how came this young man to possess in his mind such complete, such infinite, such universal ideas? How came he to rise in his conceptions heaven high above all the prophets and the wise men of all ages? Where did he get this magnificent, this vital, this eternal, this compact, this perfect system of thought; just the one for all men; one in whom no man has been able to detect a flaw, to find anything superfluous, anything wanting? And why in mere human philosophy there never has been a perfect system, or one that could stand the adverse criticism of a single age? Yet here is a system of religion that vindicates its integrity from age to age; that triumphs over all opposers and compels their involuntary homage; that blesses all men, and is preached to-day in nations civilized and uncivilized, and is just as fresh, just as vital, as it was when thousands heard it and believed it on the day of Pentecost.

5. When next we look at the form and manner of Christ's teachings, we are struck with the same unquestioned superiority to all other teachers. The human mind, by a necessity springing from its limited and imperfect powers, reaches truth, especially anything beyond the simplest elements, by slow processes of reasoning, by the observation of phenomena, putting this and that together, and from them at length inferring something else is true. You find the greatest minds subject to this law as well as those which are inferior. Even genius has been defined as simply the

power to hold the mind long fixed on a single subject, so as to follow out its various parts and connections; and when you consider the great teachers of the world, you see how true this is of them. Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, grope their way along, reasoning out this point, then that, feeling for a foothold like men in the dark treading a morass. And when they present their conclusions there is the same doubtful air, and more or less uncertainty attending all they say. Socrates was unquestionably one of the greatest as well as one of the most devout of the ancients. Yet how limited are his views; how cautiously he reasons; and even when he is about to die, he expresses great uncertainty in regard to the character of the future. But when you turn to Christ, how different is his whole character, how immensely superior in form and manner his teachings! There are no plausible speculations, no turning aside to gather flowers of rhetoric, no long process of reasoning, no uncertainty in regard to these very questions which transcend the limits of the human intellect. His thoughts are intuitions; they break forth from a full mind as the sun through the clouds. They come with a divine authority. As one who knows all things, to whose vision the past, the present, the future, heaven and hell, time and eternity are present; whose divine mind ranges through all the universe, and knows every angel's form and every sinner's destiny; to whom facts are philosophy, and reasoning is superfluous; to whom the mind of God and the mind of man are equally well known; he speaks truth with a divine certainty; he teaches with an authority that compels his hearers to say, Who is this, for he teaches with authority, and

not as the Scribes and Pharisees? Has the world ever seen another teacher like him? another who approaches him in the sublimity, the fullness, the certainty, the authority of his instructions? How came this man, just out of youth, to assume such authority, to possess such knowledge, to deviate from all others in the manner of his teachings? What model did he form himself after? Who molded this extraordinary character? Who helped to fill his soul with such a world, a universe of intuitive thought?

6. I have reserved to the close of this discussion the most remarkable characteristic of these teachings of Christ. He makes himself the center and original of all this wonderful system of religious truth. This spiritual kingdom is his kingdom, and all parts of it stand related to him as its head. He is the sacrifice for sin, from which pardon and peace come to the world. He is the way, the truth, and the life. He has all power. He is to judge the world. Men are to believe on him as their Savior. In his name they are to pray. He is to come in his glory. He is the resurrection and the life. He opens the gates of heaven. He prepares mansions for his followers. He draws all men unto him. He sends his spirit to renew and inspire his followers. He is the Living Lord who after death is to be with his people all over the world. And thus, in ways manifold and various, he constantly assumes divine functions and makes himself the center around which Christianity revolves. It may be said, indeed, that he sometimes distinguishes between himself and God. But this is a fundamental mistake. He distinguishes between his human nature and his divine. He must do this. He had the mind, the heart, the

soul, the body of a man. They in their blindness attributed to the human what did not belong to it. He corrects this error.

It was not as man he said and did these things. He had a broader personality; he was the divine word incarnate. And it was in this divine character, this higher, more real personality that he did his mighty works and spake his mighty words and assumed such sublime functions. It was not as Jesus the man, but as Christ the incarnate God he spake and acted. Otherwise he is the most horrid blasphemer the world ever saw. Slowly this idea entered and took possession of his disciples; slowly the real divinity of his nature, overspreading the human, enthroned itself in their minds. This wonderful truth, that he is now and forever the centre, the life of the Church, has taken possession of the minds of his followers in all ages. It is this that lifts him above the prophets of the Old Testament; it is this that makes the apostles of the New his mouth-piece—his exponents. Moses is the most remarkable prophet of the previous ages. Inspired of God, he laid the foundations of the system that was to abide till Christ came. But Moses is imperfect; no where does he assume such authority; he originates nothing permanent; he speaks what has been given to him; now elevated by hope, and then depressed by doubt, he fails at last to enter Canaan. Moses is but a servant, and Christ the Son and heir. Moses is a star shining by reflected light; Christ is the Sun, the light of the world. Moses foretold his coming and in spirit sat at his feet and listened to his voice, as did Abraham before him, and

all the prophets after him. Christ is more than a prophet; he is the central figure of all prophecy since the first promise to Adam and down to the last chapter of the Revelation, where he says, "I, Jesus, have sent mine angel to testify of these things." The place that he assumes as the center of Christianity and the head of this spiritual kingdom was prepared in the ages for him; he fits into it as naturally and as necessarily as the sun does into the center of our planetary system. He takes the throne not only as one born to it, but intrinsically fitted for it, and as the only one in the universe capacitated for it. No one rises to dispute it; no one stands a moment in comparison with him, the Lord of lords and King of kings.

And now, having thus briefly reviewed some of the characteristics of Christ's teachings, the question, which puzzled his Jewish hearers, returns to us: "Whence hath this man this wisdom?" It is a question which naturalists and unbelievers are bound to answer on their own principles. On their principles let us see if it can be answered. There are but three sources from which Jesus, according to their ideas, could have derived it. The first is the Grecian philosophy. There is not a particle of evidence that he ever read a Greek book or had the least acquaintance personally with a line of this philosophy. He is in no accepted sense a philosopher. In all his teachings there is not a word that betrays the least approximation to Grecian culture. His thoughts, his doctrines, are heaven high above their finest intellects. This supposition is simply incredible, far more incredible than the assertion that an ignorant Hottentot, born in kraal, and without a particle of instruction, should

have written Newton's Principia. The second source of knowledge is the Jewish or rabbinical schools of learning. But the very question of the text and the previous life of Jesus proves that he never had been a scholar under these teachers. Besides, how came it that, instead of following their lines of thought, he soars far out of their sight, that he condemns them, and dashes their whole method of interpretation to pieces? How comes it that he alone stands forth as their antagonist, and sweeps away all their traditions and all their cunning sophistries with a single sentence? You might as well say that light is the product of darkness, truth of error, power of weakness, knowledge of superstition and skepticism, as that rabbis and Sadducees taught Jesus things they themselves knew not. The mystery remains.

Well, then he learned his wisdom from the Old Testament, for this is the only remaining source. Doubtless he had studied this inspired volume, and so had hundreds and thousands of the most intelligent Jews in all ages since it was written. But how came it that he alone of all its students penetrates at once to its essence, compasses the divine mind and method of its author, separates the permanent from the transient, reveals conceptions of the kingdom of God unknown to others, and out of the prophecies brings forth the true idea of Messiah, and then presents himself as that Messiah and the fulfillment of all that was preparative and educational and typical in the law and prophets? This question can no more be answered on natural principles than the others; it can only be answered in part by making nature herself supernatural.

But, leaving the naturalist to his incredible hypothesis and his infantile skepticism, let us change our question. Let us ascend to the position of those who believe in inspiration, and who will at once say Jesus was unquestionably inspired of God. No man could stand on such a height of knowledge and do such mighty works unless God was with him. Here, then, we are in another region; the atmosphere is clear, and the sunlight falls all around us, and illumines this new and wondrous life. There is no imposture, there is no self-deception, there is no mistake in all that this inspired one utters. Now, then, our question assumes another form. Is this merely a prophet, inspired like any other prophet or apostle to reveal the will of God, or is he *organically* distinct and different from all who before or since have spoken truly in the name of God? In order to settle this question, I ask you to go over the characteristics of Christ's teachings, laying aside all preconceptions; then consider the nature and character of the assumptions respecting himself and the position which he holds in relation to God and man, and then candidly answer whether there is any inspired prophet or apostle who ever did teach as he taught, whether there ever was a mere created being that did or could justly assume to be what he assumes to be? Assumption with him is fact; and what he assumes to be and to do in this new spiritual kingdom involves every attribute of the divine nature, natural and moral. He assumes functions that necessarily involve infinite wisdom and goodness, omniscience, omnipresence and omnipotence, self-existence. What answer then will you, must you give to the question, Whence has he this wisdom? What but

this: He ORGANICALLY is unlike all other beings. What answer but that which John gives: "In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God." In him was life, and the life was the light of man. He is both God and man. He is in our nature to suffer; he is divine to make that suffering salvation. In him as its center, Christianity is perfect—the highest wisdom of God. In him I see the brightness of the Father's glory and the express image of his person. Here stood the apostles, and this was the inspiration of their preaching: "Christ in them the hope of glory." Here has stood and still stands the church which Jesus bought with his blood and redeemed by his spirit. Here to-day we stand on the foundation of prophets and apostles, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone. I come to this Redeemer with all my most precious interests, and commit them into his hands. I would not commit my immortal soul to seraphic cherubs. I come to him a sinner, and he forgives my sins. I come to him in sorrow, and he sends me the Comforter. I come to him in temptation, perplexity, and weakness; he strengthens and guides me into the paths of righteousness and peace. I come to him when the cold sweat of death is on my brow, and heart and flesh fail me, and he gently puts his arm beneath and opens the gates of immortality for me to enter. O Christ, my suffering and ascended Lord! we praise thee, we trust thee, we hope to worship thee on the sea of glass as our Incarnate Saviour and Redeemer for ever and ever.

## VI.

## JOHN THE BAPTIST.

*“And he confessed, and denied not : but confessed, I am not the Christ. And they asked him, What then ? Art thou Elias ? And he saith, I am not. Art thou that Prophet ? And he answered, No. Then said they unto him, Who art thou ? that we may give an answer to them that sent us : What sayest thou of thyself ? He said, I am the VOICE of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the Prophet Esaias.”—John i, 20, 24.*

WE have come now to the last and greatest prophet of the Hebrews. Foretold in prophecy, born supernaturally, out of due time, antedating, by some six months, the birth of our Lord. At the ripe age of thirty years, he suddenly, and for a brief period, becomes the central figure on which all eyes are fixed ; as a flaming star, he appears above the horizon foretelling the dawn, and then is lost in the overwhelming splendors of *the sun*. His early training corresponds with the great work he is to perform. His parents were of the priestly race—among the most devout of those who prayed and waited for the coming of Messiah ; their minds were specially informed and elevated by the supernatural circumstances and influences attending the birth of this child. They comprehended the exalted position he was to occupy. He

was not to succeed his father in the priestly office. It was his nobler destiny to be the Prophet of the Highest; to announce the coming of Him who is to be the High Priest of the world. Under such parents his early culture corresponds with the peculiar office he is to fill. His mind is early imbued with the sublime truths of religion. Destined in prophecy to be a Nazarene, he is trained to self-control and the sternest self-denial. He is not to be a man of the world; it is not for him to illustrate in the social relations, as the head of a family, the virtues of religion. He is to be a man by himself; to fulfill an office solitary and unique. As his mind matures, he enters into the sphere of those supernatural ideas which filled the souls of his parents. He comprehends his destiny; his heart responds to it. He takes on him naturally the investiture of this sublime office. His whole character develops in harmony with it. This family is not like other families. It is the highest type of intense Hebrew thought and feeling. Father, mother, son, live in a world of loftiest spirituality. Their prayers, their praises, their thinking, their fellowship, their lives, are exalted by a divine enthusiasm, of which the Messiah and this, his Prophet, are the perpetual inspiration. They live amidst the opening glories of the New Dispensation. Under these influences the child grows to manhood. Then, one by one, in all probability, these aged parents pass to their home in heaven. Their house, his home, is desolate. No domestic ties bind him to the hearthstone. His work is not among the ordinary avocations of men. Society has no charms for him. Where shall he abide until the time comes for him to enter upon the high office to which he is

destined? Leaving the town of Jutta, where it is supposed Zacharias dwelt, a few hours' walk brings you to the summit of the limestone ridge which, like a huge backbone, runs along the center of Palestine, from the desert on the south to the great plains of Esdraelon on the north. From this point you look down eastward on the mountains of Moab; and this side of them, sleeping in quiet unconsciousness of that terrible storm of fire which once swept Sodom and Gomorrah from existence, is the Dead Sea. As you descend towards this spot, vegetation grows more scanty; the white rocks push themselves up more boldly; the ravines grow deeper; caves pierce the rocks in all directions; and the whole scene changes to one of weird and rugged desolation. Here David dwelt in these caves to escape the vengeance of Saul. Here Jesus was led by the spirit to be tempted of the devil. In portions of this region dwelt the ascetic Essenes; and hither John retired from the world to await the hour for action—wrapped in a robe of camel's hair, living on the simple diet supplied by nature, he communed with God, and studied the prophecies which respected the Messiah and himself, his forerunner. Nor are we to suppose that this wilderness life was without its effect in assisting to form him for his work. There are some souls that grow deeper and stronger for action, when the fit time comes, in comparative solitude. Amid the quiet of his forty years' exile, Moses acquired a special preparation for leadership. Cromwell, in his country home, learned to think broadly; nourished that sturdy independence which lifted him above the whole line of British rulers, as the man for his age. Washington, at Mount Vernon, developed a strength of judg-

ment and power of command he would never have gained amidst the excitement of cities. Men who are to act great parts in the world need sometimes to isolate themselves, to let their individual nature grow in its fullness, to stand face to face with God, with his works, and with themselves. Trees in the forest grow straight, tall, and almost branchless, and when you cut down their surroundings a fresh breeze will level them. But the trees that grow separate, root themselves deeper, develop the true fullness and richness of their life; while the hurricane is hardly strong enough to tear them from their moorings. Society refines and rounds off the rough peculiarities of men and assimilates them in character and manners; while its superficial excitements often destroy with individuality the very power of profound thought. Away from the masses, men develop a truer individuality and a strength of independence, which prepares them to lead and elevate their fellow-men—provided with this there is ever associated the needful stimulants to thought—the presence of great objects adapted to call out their powers. As a discipline for action in society retirement has its uses. John, under its influence, unquestionably developed these remarkable traits which fitted him for his work. For remember he was no mere ascetic, designing to spend his life in solitude and waste his powers in doing nothing. He had a grand object before him; a great work for which he was preparing. This counteracted the otherwise debasing influence of inaction. He was in training for his work. This fired his enthusiasm; this exalted his whole being.

And now the time has come. The season of prep-

aration is past; the hour for action is at hand. "The word of God came unto John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness." The Spirit of God that had dwelt with him and formed him for his work now moves him to go forth among men. God holds the heart in his hand. When he calls his servants to do some special and great work for him—a work against which nature rebels—he not only orders his providence so as to lead in this direction, but gives secret impulses to the soul itself. Then men feel "woe is me if I preach not the gospel." The world offers them its prizes: a thousand earthly forces draw them away; still the deeper impulse, the divine force in the soul, moves them into the path chosen of God. So Paul, Chrysostom, Augustine, Bernard, Luther, Whitfield, and thousands more, abandoning the brightest worldly prospects, have obeyed this heavenly voice, and for Christ and his kingdom have preached and prayed and lived a consecrated life. To John this word came with irresistible power. What conflicts he endured! Whether his sensitive nature shrank from the path before him, we know not. Only this we know, *he obeyed*. The prophet power was upon him; like his great prototype, Elijah, amid the solitudes of Sinai, when he heard the *still small voice*, he listened, he obeyed. He takes his place at once as God's commissioned representative, and fulfills the prophecy of Isaiah, "the voice of one crying in the wilderness, prepare ye the way of the Lord."

The river Jordan is one of the most remarkable, both for its historical associations and its peculiar character, in the world. Rising at the foot of Lebanon on the north in a full stream, it passes through

the Lake of Gennesareth, and descending, in a course of less than two hundred miles, two thousand feet, it loses itself in the mephitic waters of the Dead Sea. Across its waters, since the time of Joshua, armies had passed. No cities, nor towns, rose on its lone banks; but the hills on either side were crowned with villages and towns, in which dwelt a vast population. Along its western side ran the great highway from Galilee to Jerusalem, along which multitudes journeyed to attend the great feasts. We can not do justice to the truthfulness of this narrative, without attempting to imagine the scene. The feast of the Passover is near. In companies of hundreds, in companies of thousands, the devout Israelites are moving to Jerusalem. The sun is in the west; the day's march is over, and encamped not far from Jericho, the host, singing the songs of Zion, are preparing for rest. Issuing from his desert home the prophet appears among them. His peculiar garb arrests a momentary attention, but it was too common then, as it is in that section at this day, to awaken more than a transient interest. Reaching a suitable position, where all could readily gather around him, he commences his discourse. His voice rings full and clear, and startles the most stupid. At once all other thoughts and interests are forgotten. Silently, in groups, they move near the speaker. His rapt utterance, his words of burning intensity, his thoughts, grand and majestic, convince them that no common enthusiast is before them. Curious, at first, with half-awakened minds, they listen. Now he strikes an answering chord; the heart-beat quickens, the eye flashes; he dwells upon their sublime history; he paints the scenes of the past; prophet after prophet marches

before him in long procession ; their victories and their captivities ring out in triumph or wail in sadness ; then he describes the sins of the people, their blindness, their ingratitude, their hypocrisy, in words of terrible severity ; he preaches the necessity of reformation and repentance, and every conscience answers, Amen. Then, rising to a sublime height, he dwells on the prophecies of Messiah ; step by step he advances, from the earliest to the latest ; he tells them how unchangeable is God ; how sure his promises ; how all along from the call of Abraham he had chosen and trained that nation for the manifestation of this glorious personage ; how their captivities and conflicts were only preparations for this event ; and then, when he has brought their whole souls into sympathy with this great expectation, he flashes upon their astonished minds the very thought which leaps to every lip as he utters it : The kingdom of heaven is at hand ! Messiah is born ! Messiah is to appear ! The sun is gone down ; they heed it not ; darkness spreads its raven wing over them, but they know it not ; and then when the last words have been spoken, they linger and then slowly retire, not to sleep, but to think over the glorious announcement—Christ's messenger has come ! Henceforth John, the last, is the greatest of Hebrew prophets. As on the morrow they journey to Jerusalem, they hear the news of this new and wonderful prophet. Among the myriads that gather at Jerusalem, it flies from lip to lip—the prophet of the Lord ! Then men begin to recall the memories of thirty years before—Zacharias and the angel in the temple and the supernatural birth of John. And soon the roads to the Jordan are crowded with all classes, eager to hear

these words of the Lord—this grand prelude to the grander scene. All Jerusalem and Judea and the region round about flock to listen.

I now request your attention, first, to the special mission of this prophet, and, second, to his character as fitting him to perform this mission. Four hundred years had passed since Malachi, the last prophet, had died. The words which closed the Old Testament scriptures predicted the coming of Messiah and his messenger, John. This intermission of prophetic teachers is explained by the fact that the lesson taught by the captivity of the unity and sovereignty of Jehovah had taken full possession of the nation. The establishment of synagogues, in large numbers, all over the land, secured to the people regular Sabbath worship and instruction in the Scriptures themselves. The necessity for the order of prophets was by this fact removed, and God, in the gift of spiritual powers, never employs the supernatural when natural agencies are sufficient for the accomplishment of his objects. Meanwhile the nation has flourished. Amidst some terrible scenes it has repeatedly asserted its true nationality and practical independence. But now the total destruction of that nationality seemed imminent. Rome, like a mighty anaconda, had wound its folds around the life of the state and gradually tightened them, crushing it out. Pontius Pilate sat as Rome's representative in Jerusalem; Herod Antipas in Galilee, and Philip on the east of the Jordan, held their offices at the will of the Emperor. The nation was divided; the priestly functions were made the prices of submission to the ruling power. The abomination of desolation was already in the courts of the temple. The

help of man was vain: The nation, writhing, uneasy, longing for deliverance, waited the coming of a Messiah, who at the head of the state and the church should hurl the Roman from the throne and restore the nation to the splendor of its ancient reigns. A prophet issuing from the wilderness suddenly presents himself to the people. Two ideas characterize his preaching. The first and the vital point was the speedy coming of Messiah. Couched under the sentence, "The kingdom of heaven," was the idea of a spiritual dynasty, a heavenly ruler, a true theocratic state. He does not attempt to define this kingdom. It was not revealed to him in its fullness. It belonged to the Messiah himself to announce the plan of this kingdom. John's work was simply that of preparation. He felt he knew that the functions of the Messiah were to be grandly spiritual; that he was to restore the true worship in the hearts of the people; that he was to purify unto himself a peculiar people, and punish with summary destruction all who opposed his reign. But that he had been led up to the Christian stand-point and saw the church as a power outside of and independent of the state, we have no reason to suppose. He spake of the Messiah as a mighty king who would sift the nation of its impure and evil elements, and gather about him the true worshipers of God. But he nowhere intimates the destruction of the state itself. In this respect, greatest of prophets though he was, the least of the Christian host is greater than he. He did no miracles; for they were not necessary to the success of his work. It was not for him to unfold and establish the new kingdom, but to prepare for its coming. Isaiah's description of him as

“the voice of one crying in the wilderness, prepare ye the way of the Lord,” characterizes him and his work with wonderful exactness. He announces the coming Messiah. That voice, ringing out from the valley of the Jordan over the hills of Judea, touched the chords of national feeling, heightened expectation, stimulated millions to thought, quickened the spirit of prayer and hope in the devout, and thus prepared the immediate coming of the Anointed Son of God. Such is the first and most vital fact in his preaching. The second characteristic of his preaching was the injunction of something to be done by the people in order to prepare themselves for the advent of Messiah. He knows well their condition. There is a vast amount of outward religion, and very little practical religion. Like parrots they repeated prayers at the corners of the streets, but the heart was untouched by divine love. Formalism and traditionalism had usurped the throne of God in them. Can darkness dwell with light? Will impurity and pride receive the holy Messiah? He treats the assumption of multitudes, that as children of Abraham they were specially sacred, with most magnificent scorn. I say unto you, that of these stones God can raise up children to Abraham. The pride, the hypocrisy, the worldliness of the Pharisee and Sadducee he denounces with the most terrible invective. He treats them all, from the highest to the lowest, as impure; he exhorts them to repentance and a hearty reformation. He strikes right at their sins, as unfitting them to enter this kingdom of heaven. He virtually excommunicates the whole nation, and declares that repentance, a new heart, a new life, was

essential to enable them to become followers of Messiah and true children of God.

The Jews had long been familiar with the use of water as a symbol of purification. Sprinklings, and pourings, and washings, were prescribed in the Mosaic law as parts of ceremonial purification, and every proselyte received into the church from other nations was baptized to signify his repentance, his putting on a new life, his consecration to the pure service of Jehovah. And so John, treating this whole people as foreigners, baptized them as penitents, about to put on a new life and be converted to the service of Messiah. It was not Christian baptism. They were not baptized into the faith of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. It was Jewish baptism for uncleanness, with the superadded idea of their faith in a Messiah soon to appear. His preaching was eminently practical. He did not tell them to become ascetics, to go out of the world; but in the world to be faithful. To the soldiers he said, Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely, and be content with your wages. To the publicans he said, Exact no more than that which is appointed you. To others he enjoined liberality and kindness. He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath much, let him do likewise. And thus unveiling sin, denouncing wrath to come on the impenitent, kindly guiding the sincere inquirers into the path of duty, he roused and instructed the nation and lifted up before them the banner of a coming Messiah. Such was the work of this great prophet. Such the mission of preparation he accomplished.

Let us consider now the man and his character. For

in the election of God there is usually a real harmony and fitness between the agent he employs and the work to be accomplished. And this man was trained and fitted by his peculiar character to give a decided impulse to the mind of the nation in preparing the way for the coming of Jesus. You will notice at once his marked independence and intense individuality. He stands out clear, well-defined, unique; not more distinct and separate in his dress and mode of life than in his individual character. He is no copy of other men. The only child in his father's family, he is subject there to a peculiar discipline. Passing into the wilderness, communing with God, conversing with the minds of prophets, unrestrained and unaffected by the artificial influences of society, his original traits developed strongly and harmoniously. Simple in his manner of life, he felt not the want of wealth and cared nothing for it. With his faith rooted in God and his soul nourished by the sublimest truth, he was utterly indifferent to station or power. Pleasure had no attractions for him. The opinions of men neither excited nor influenced him. Self-contained in the mastery of his own passions, and the deep convictions which possessed him, he moved in a sphere of his own. Just such a man was needed at this time to perform this work: a man who sympathized with neither Pharisee nor Sadducee, with neither Essene nor Roman—a man who, nurtured on the simple truth of Scripture, should see through all the falsities and hypocrisies of the times, and, rising above them all, should proclaim that truth in its application to the want of the age.

Connected with this is the singleness of his purpose and the intense enthusiasm with which he prosecutes his work. One grand idea possesses him—the manifestation of Jesus Christ to Israel. To make this thought a living, operative power in the minds of the people, he bends all his energies. He turns not aside even to visit Jerusalem; he enters into no discussions of the minor opinions that divide the nation. The sects, the divisions are nothing to him; for Christ is coming, whose kingdom is to absorb all others, and in whose light all men are to see higher truths. Here is one secret of his power. Men who scatter their efforts over a variety of objects seldom succeed in any one. Life is too short and the mind of man too limited in its powers to admit of this. And John, with a true philosophy, has but one purpose, and to effect this he gives himself with a divine enthusiasm. Day by day, for weeks, for months, men crowd around him. He preaches, he prays, he baptizes. No man can number the multitudes that from all parts of Palestine flocked to see and hear this prophet. His work was short, but it was fully accomplished. The voice from the wilderness ceased not its call to repentance until Christ himself had entered upon his ministry and the night was past.

Springing out of this independence and this intense unity of purpose was a *third* characteristic, his *boldness*. In his character of prophet he meets all men with the same imperturbed and imperturbable spirit. Proud rabbis and priests are there with ecclesiastical power in their hands to try and condemn him when the time shall come. Pharisees are there with their phylacteries and ritualistic holiness on their foreheads.

Sadducees are there with their doubts and rationalistic theories. He sees through them all; he holds up the mirror to their faces; he hurls upon them the most terrible rebukes. Herod Antipas, the seducer of Herodias, and then her incestuous husband, can not escape him. His palace walls are not thick enough to shut out the voice of this prophet of the Lord as it accuses him of *sin and crime*. Fearing the face of no man, he hesitates not to uncover the individual and national corruption which is preparing the nation for its doom. The ax is already laid at the root of the tree, and if repentance follows not, and good fruit be not speedily borne, there is a power in reserve appointed of God to cut it down.

A fourth characteristic of John is the spirit of self-abnegation which he evinced. This is most extraordinary. Men of great enthusiasm, of intense purpose, of great power over the masses, consciously or unconsciously, in most cases become intent on self-aggrandizement. They may begin as reformers, but they end as originators of policies and schemes of which they are to be the recognized head. In the state they form parties; in the church sects, or societies, or schools, the purpose in every case being to bolster up their power or perpetuate their principles. Men naturally cling to power; power while they live, and power in some form which is to survive and perpetuate them when they are dead. But John commenced his ministry on the one fixed principle that he was but the messenger of one greater than he; one whose shoelatchet he was not worthy to unloose. On this principle he acted consistently. In the midst of his most wonderful triumphs, as a preacher, he organized no

society, he founded no school or sect; for that which afterward took his name had no sympathy with his spirit and no authority from him. And when Christ appeared there he pointed him out to the assembled multitude. He was the one who was to baptize, not with water, but with the Holy Ghost and with fire. Then when Christ had fairly entered upon his work, he says plainly to his immediate disciples, jealous for the honor of their master, He must increase and I must decrease. And thus, his work accomplished, he retires practically from the field. He is nothing; Jesus is to be henceforth all in all.

The last grand characteristic of this second Elijah is sublime faith in God and the coming Messiah. This is the root of all his peculiar life; this the source of his self-abnegation, his boldness, his enthusiasm, his singleness of purpose, his holy eloquence. Faith in God's word animated his whole soul and made him the fit forerunner of the Messiah. I know it has been that even he wavered in his faith in reference to Christ as the actual Messiah; that when he saw that Jesus did not begin to teach a visible kingdom, in the solitude of his prison, his faith, for a time, like that of all other men, like that of Elijah when he fled from Ahab into the wilderness, declined—and then he sent his disciples to Jesus with the inquiry, "Art thou he that should come, or look we for another?" But, while I would not arrogate to John immunity from the weakness incident to all mere humanity here in the flesh, yet it strikes me that a nobler, a better explanation of this act is found in his desire, now that he is about to depart, to ground his disciples themselves in the faith which sustained his own soul; and that to

do this he took occasion to send them to Jesus to converse with him, to hear his instructions and witness his miracles, and thus enable him finally to abnegate all authority over them and show them the true Messiah. This course is all in harmony with his life; this vindicates his faith; this puts the seal upon the humility of his spirit, and consecrates the close of his mission with an act of rare moral heroism.

And now we come to the sad and yet fitting close. His work is done—the noblest work of all the prophets. Jesus has appeared. It is not for him to be an apostle; he must learn the secret of redemption in the world of light. It is fitting that he, like many of his predecessors, should seal his faithfulness by a martyr's death. The foul Herodias, like another Jezebel, thirsts for his life; and the weak Herod, fascinated by the dancing of Salome, imbrues his hands in the prophet's blood. Oh, you sceptered and mitred ones, what a terrible account is yours to give for the holocausts of God's saints ye have slaughtered? Oh! lust and ambition, what monsters ye have begotten! Oh, where in this earth shall faith and love hold the scepter of power, and right and might be joined in the triumphal reign of our king Immanuel?

Such is the mission and the character of John. How grandly fitting it was that such a prophet, with more than the boldness and eloquence and light of Elijah, should close the long and splendid array of Hebrew prophets and usher in the Christian dispensation! He is not a human product. Unlike the mass of great leaders in history, he is not the product of his age; he stands forth unique and largely antagonistic. A supernatural power rests upon him, and lifts him

above the multitude. The voice that he utters is divine. Yet aside from his special work you see that he is still a Hebrew prophet. The spirit of the Mosaic law breathes in him. Compare John the Baptist with John the apostle. What an immense, I had almost said, an immeasurable difference! What makes this difference? Christ the Messiah has intervened. John, the greatest prophet, is but a child beside John the apostle. Both are formed and inspired by the same divine Spirit. But one is of the law, the other is of the gospel. One is molded and trained to prepare the way for Christ, the other to preach the new kingdom of light and love already come. And so the words of Christ find their explanation, "The least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he."

It is a thought to be ever remembered, that the value of life is to be measured by deeds, not by years. For thirty years John is in training; his work occupies but a few months. Yet what a value attaches to that short life of action? Spencer, Summerfield, Mills, Mrs. Newell, Young, Hume, Tyng, die in the very opening of their manhood and womanhood; what myriads even of Christians live to three score years, whose lives, measured by deeds, by influence for good exerted, can compare with theirs? Young Christian, dwelling under this brighter light of the cross, gird thyself for work in the Master's service. Die, you may, early; but die with the harness on; let the faith of this Hebrew, illuminated by the words of Jesus, animate you to lead men to repentance. Be bold, be single-hearted, be enthusiastic in the great cause you have espoused. Pray and work; work and

pray. The night cometh; starless and dark to the sinner; to you, if faithful, the harbinger of eternal day.

Nor let us forget to-night that the dispensation of rites and forms has closed. Now a free gospel calls all men to repentance and faith, offers them a Redeemer, opens to them immortality. Who here will leave this place and turn himself to the world and make up his mind to live and die a gospel-hardened sinner? This morning I pled with you by the compassion of Jesus to consecrate yourself to his service. To-night I hold up before you the illustrious example of a prophet who had not your light, yet lived and died faithful to the truth of God. By all the blood of martyrs and prophets before Christ came; by all the pains and sorrows of multitudes of Christian souls since then; by the richer blood of our Great High Priest; by the wondrous light ye enjoy; by the shortness of time rushing by and the shades of night soon to gather round you; by that hour when you shall stand before Christ in judgment; by all the pains and woes and harms of a sinful life lost forever, and all the holiness and joy of a life saved forever, I intreat you, flee from the wrath to come.

## VII.

## THE BAPTISM OF JESUS.

*“Then cometh Jesus from Galilee unto John, to be baptized of him. But John forbade him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me? And Jesus answering, said unto him, Suffer it to be so now; for thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness. Then he suffered him. And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of (or from) the water, and lo! the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, lighting upon him, and lo! a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son in whom I well pleased.”—Matthew iii, 13-17; Mark i, 9-11; Luke iii, 21, 22; John i.*

JOHN has now been engaged in his ministry of preparation for some months, probably nearly a year. The effect of his preaching was wonderful. Thousands had heard him; and, in all probability, there was scarcely an Israelite of mature age who had not heard of him and the truth he proclaimed. He had reawakened and given a definite form to the slumbering expectations of the Messiah in the whole population of Palestine. The work of preparation is accomplished. The hour for the manifestation has come. Jēsus, now about thirty years of age, leaves his home in Nazareth, and journeying east and south, not far from the lake of Gennesareth, and along the Jordan,

reaches Bethabara, or Bethany, on the other side of the Jordan. This precise locality has never been ascertained. It was probably near one of the fords of the Jordan, and some distance above Jericho. At the point opposite Jericho, where pilgrims usually bathe, the water is too deep to be crossed, except in boats—here Jesus presents himself for baptism.

Just here a question arises, which it is necessary for us to answer before we proceed to the baptism itself: Did John know Jesus personally before this? Matthew says that when Jesus presented himself, John forbade him, saying, “I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?” But in the account given by the Evangelist John, the Baptist affirms that he knew him not. Two suppositions are made to account for this apparent difference. The first is that John did know Christ personally, but not officially as the Messiah; that while he knew and revered him as his superior in piety, yet that, until he had received some direct instruction from heaven, it was not for him to recognize him in his Messianic character. The testimony on this point must be direct and supernatural. And, until that was received, he could not recognize and point him out as the *one* to prepare the *way*, for whom he had come. The second supposition is that John did not know Christ, neither personally nor officially, until the *spirit* made him manifest. There was that in the appearance of Jesus which, filling up the anticipations of his own prophetic spirit, and harmonizing with the silent suggestions of this spirit, armed and disarmed him—as in the presence of a superior being; and, laying aside his official dignity, he says,

in the deep consciousness of his own sinfulness: "I have need to be baptized of thee." Either of these suppositions will harmonize the two Evangelists. But the second seems to me, on the whole, most perfectly in accord with the spirit of the whole scene. On this subject, I make three points. The first is that John must have been perfectly familiar with the supernatural origin and early history of Jesus. His own birth, so intimately connected with it; the relationship of Mary and Elizabeth; the marked character of those events, and the anticipations they inspired, must have necessitated this knowledge. Those angelic appearances; those songs on the fields of Bethlehem; the visit of the wise men; all must have been known to him. In connection with his own history, they must have been familiar themes of conversation, and topics of profound thought from his earliest years. His life, his character, receives its form and some of its inspiration from these events. He knew, too, that his life and that of Jesus were to be mysteriously connected. To him, too, in his heart, he looked as the promised Messiah, and out in the wilderness he felt himself in the presence of this one who was to be infinitely greater than himself.

The second point is that their early homes were widely separated. His own parents were aged; Mary was surrounded by a family and burdened with its cares. There is no record of a visit from one to the other after that *first* memorable abode of Mary in the house of Elizabeth, and after the final settlement of Joseph at Nazareth there is no probability that such an event occurred. Zacharias and Elizabeth soon pass away. John retires into the wilderness. If, before

this, they may have met, Jesus and John, at the feasts in Jerusalem, it was in early youth, and could have been but for a brief season; meanwhile they have grown to mature manhood; the lineaments of early life have changed, so that certain recognition would have been difficult, if not impossible.

In point of fact, whatever suppositions we may imagine, there is not a single word in the sacred narratives to authorize the idea that the Baptist and the Savior had ever met, or ever consciously known each other. The mediæval painters delight to represent the boy John along with the infant Jesus; but, however beautiful this may be in painting and poetry, such a representation derives not a particle of authority from the inspired record. My third point is that these two lives in their development were never designed to be coincident, and were not so in fact. The only points where they meet are in infancy and at the final manifestation. John is a solitary child in the family of aged parents, trained in the strict discipline of a Nazarite, early leaving all society and in the wilderness nourishing his lofty aspirations and preparing himself for his special work. Jesus is reared in a family with young associates, calling into free play all the finer and lovelier sensibilities of his nature. Then he is in the carpenter's shop, in contact with toil and in sympathy with its trials. He is in a busy town, where human nature reveals itself in all its diverse peculiarities. And under these free and open circumstances his humanity has full play for all its affections, and grows up in favor with God and man. Both study the same inspired record; both are full of the spirit. But in their distinctive and peculiar charac-

teristics they stand at opposite poles. Now, notice how in this independent development two widely different things are effected. (1.) The work of each is totally different, and the method of their lives fits each for his own work. John is to be simply the prophet-preacher—the prophetic voice—the messenger of the Lord to summon the Israelites to repēntance and preparation for the coming Messiah, and for that work and that alone the discipline of his life gave him a wonderful fitness. Jesus is to be Messiah; in sympathy with humanity, bearing its burdens, suffering for its sins, redeeming it from its guilt; and for this work no better discipline for his human nature can be imagined than that through which he passed. (2.) This entire independence of their lives and opposition of character precludes all idea of collusion between them. They do not even know each other personally. John is influenced by no direct intercourse with Jesus. Jesus is wholly unaffected by the Nazarite's solitary life. The idea advanced by one or two rationalists that Jesus had borrowed from John, and had been specially influenced by him in forming his plan for the future church, is too absurd for refutation. You can not find in history, nor can you imagine, two persons animated by the same spirit, whose development, characteristics, and plans were more thoroughly diverse. There is a divine unity in spirit, while in their human developments there are the most striking contrasts. This independence in character reveals the wisdom of God in their preparation for the work appointed to each. The hammer and the sword both may be of the same material, forged in the same fire; but how divine in form and how different the work they are fitted for!

John was the prophetic hammer to break down the pride and formalism of the Jew ; Christ, the divine sword, whose word was to separate the false and the true and divide asunder soul and spirit. Thus the separation of these two lives in their development subserves an important purpose in the introduction of the kingdom of heaven.

We come now to one of the most remarkable scenes in history—the meeting of Messiah and his prophet. Most men are, at first, more or less impressed by personal appearance. To coarser nations, apparent size, physical strength, attracts admiration. Their idea of greatness is a Cyclops. Among these, Paul, Luther, Napoleon, Hamilton would pass unnoticed. Others, accustomed to analyze character and trace the signs of true power, detect its developments in the expression of the countenance and the lines which thought or an intense purpose has drawn. Washington possessed a peculiarly commanding presence, which fortunately was sustained by his singular balance of mental powers, his clear judgment, his quiet decision and self-control. Yet the greatest men in history would at first have passed unnoticed in the crowd. It is not till their great thoughts and deeds have kindled admiration, that the imagination transfigures them with the glory of their innate greatness. What was Christ's personal appearance we have no satisfactory means of determining. The epistle of Lentulus describes him as grave, with a benign expression of countenance. No portrait of him was ever drawn. We are thankful for it. For what pencil, wielded by what master of his art, could fix to the eye of sense so as to interpret to the soul the mingled beauty, grandeur, love, sever-

ity, intelligence of Him to whom all other men are but fragments and wrecks of a perfect humanity. I care not, for this reason, to look upon a painting of Jesus. The soul of every truly Christian man knows they are but the sensual imagery of some one, the conditions of his moral being affecting his mental action, so that he gives us only a transcript of his own moral poverty, ignorance, and stupidity. Divine goodness, benignity, love, a soul bearing the sins of men are its heart, an intelligence that brings into darkness man's highest conceptions and thoughts, the sense of justice hallowed by mercy, who of mortal men can paint these? Yet these are the grand characteristics that must have impressed themselves on that divine countenance. Oh ye artists, paint Mary, if ye choose, as Raphael paints a pretty young German mother, without one distinctive line of a Jewess in her face, and we will applaud the success; but approach not Jesus. Had you seen him, his unapproachable grandeur would have paralyzed your hand; you could not even then have limned the expressions of the divine. And how now can ye create out of your poverty of soul an image that shall express him who is the express image of God himself? Standing in that crowd he is unknown; all eyes are turned, all thoughts are intent on John, the most striking figure in Judea. One by one they are baptized and pass aside. Then Jesus approaches. As John's eye falls upon him his soul takes in the spiritual majesty of that countenance. The prophet's soul is sensitive to the slightest indications of character. A proud Pharisee, a flippant Sadducee are disorders in his heart. With eye, ear, soul awake in expectation, he is waiting for *His* coming.

As his eye meets the calm look of Jesus, a voice thrills through the silent chambers of his heart—*He is come! He is here!* Awe-struck, speechless, he stands for a moment. A divine afflatus breathed, as it were, from the silent Savior into his soul, answers, *I am He, thy long-expected Messiah.* Instantly his official authority, his prophet-dignity, his unquestioned superiority, fall from him. A trembling sinner, he stands before the king of kings. The noblest, grandest character in Palestine, the greatest prophet of the Hebrews bending in lowly worship, cries in plaintive, almost piteous tones, "I have need to be baptized of Thee—comest *Thou* to me!"

In this sublime scene the old and the new—the dispensation of Moses and the direct dispensation of Jesus—stand face to face. Moses and Samuel, David and Isaiah, and the mighty train of prophets are there incarnate in John, their last and greatest; Aaron and his priestly sons gather at the river's side in wonder and worship. The tabernacle, the temple, with all their gorgeous ceremonial and sacrificial altars, soon to give place to the cross and the simpler rites of a spiritual church, are round us in that hour. He, whom they all proclaimed, prefigured, waited for, has come! The Redeemer is here to be manifested to Israel, and leave all these servants and these arrangements of the past in the person of John. Then *He* speaks, "*Suffer it to be so now; for thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness.*" What righteousness? The ceremonial righteousness of the Old Testament. This baptism of John was just as much a part of that as sacrifice and offerings and circumcision. They were all parts of a system of things designed to prepare the way for the

coming of Christ. John, a prophet, moved of God, as Moses was before him, instituted this rite as a special ceremonial preparatory to the immediate coming of Jesus. It rested on precisely the same foundations as every other rite already prescribed in their ritual, and it became the Messiah to submit to it for two reasons.

First, it became him to honor this system in his person, which he, through his servants, had in time past established, to accomplish a glorious purpose. This system had done its work. For centuries it had preserved the knowledge and maintained the worship of the one living and true God. Everywhere else idolatry and gross superstition had settled upon the world. At one point, among one people, in one temple alone, there was light, there was pure truth, there was true worship. From that point it radiated out into the dense surrounding darkness. It had formed the historic and prophetic preparation for the development of Christianity. It perpetuated the true church until Christ came to open its doors to the world and send forth the law from Jerusalem. This system was now about to pass away into history. Its living power—the divine spirit which had originated, sustained, and used it for purposes so immensely important—was to be withdrawn; and the church, with Christ no longer enshrined in forms, in anticipation, but with a living, crucified, risen Christ, with a fuller revelation of truth, was to move forward to the conquest of the world. Now it was to be expected, because it was fitting, that the hidden Christ, when he came, should recognize this system as his work, should honor it as divine, should put the seal of his testimony to the

work it had accomplished. The last of the prophets sent forth under this system has instituted, in connection with his work, baptism as a special ceremony and symbol of purification, preparatory to the manifestation of Messiah. And as Jesus had honored all the observances of this house of the Lord hitherto, so now he honors this his prophet and recognizes his great mission as divine, by submitting to his baptism, as one of the people.

But there is another reason which justifies and sets forth in a clear light the fitness of Christ's conduct. In the work of redeeming men he humbled himself to the assumption of their nature; further than this, he proceeds—he is made under the law. He takes upon himself all its duties, all its observances, for the very purpose of illustrating the excellence of the law and, by his own humiliation under it, satisfying all its provisions, even to the endurance of death itself. If you ask why did Jesus, who was immaculate purity, submit to the symbol of purification as if he were a sinner, I ask with equal pertinency, why was he circumcised? Why was he, the redeemer of man, redeemed as a first-born son by the offering in the temple? Why did he, who was himself the great sacrifice, consent to offer sacrifices and eat the pascal lamb, which was a type of himself? And the answer comes full and clear, because he had identified himself with man as if he was a sinner; because, in order to fulfill the law and perfect himself as the captain of salvation and the sympathizing high priest of the human soul, he had undertaken to bear all its burdens, and submit to all its trials, and discharge all its duties. To-day, O sinner! as you study this life of Jesus, you will mark, with wonder,

how he never claimed exemption, on account of his divine dignity, from one single observance of the law, or a single duty devolving upon him as a being clothed with your nature. And, therefore, you see him approach the prophet, as before he had approached the priest, and saying to the trembling John, astonished that he who was to baptize men with the Holy Ghost should submit himself to the baptism of a sinful man: "Suffer it to be so now; for so it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness." This voice, which no man ever heard with indifference, now, for the first time, heard by him, thrills through the prophet as the voice of God. Instantly he obeys. Meekly the Savior, standing a little way in the stream, receives from his own servant's hands the symbol of purification. Ascending the bank of the river, he prays. His whole soul, filled with the fearful yet glorious mission he has undertaken, and in which he is now about visibly to enter, is absorbed in communion with God. All the past, all the dread, solemn future, with its after glory, held possession of him, as he feels himself irrevocably committed to the amazing work of human redemption. This is the hour, this the moment, chosen for the full manifestation of his Messiahship to his appointed messenger. His appearance, his words, attended by the inward witness of the *spirit*, have deeply impressed John with his superiority to himself. Now he is to receive the unmistakable evidence that this is indeed the long-expected Messiah whose speedy coming he has with such intense earnestness proclaimed. Suddenly the heavens seemed to open, as if through a vista the splendors of the upper world shone down upon the Savior, and the Spirit of God, as in the form of a dove, descends

slowly and rests upon him, and, while his eyes are filled with this wonderful vision, a voice proceeds from that central glory: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." That opened heaven, with its shining glory, is brighter than the sun; that dove, with its gentle motions, as clearly defined as the form of Christ himself; that voice as full, as distinct, as ever entered mortal ears. Henceforth John proclaims no more a Messiah *to come*; but the Messiah *come*.

Various questions have been raised in reference to this scene. The rationalist endeavors to account for it on natural principles. It is difficult to deny that this scene occurred. All the Evangelists record it. But then it is supposed that it was somehow the product of a heated imagination, representing to John rather the creations of his own fancy than actual facts. This class of people are afraid to step a foot into the spiritual world. They shudder at the idea of the supernatural. In their gross materialistic philosophy, God is nothing more than natural, physical force, bound up in it, as a galley slave is chained to the oar. And to get rid of the facts, which stand out bold, clear, unquestioned by any just historical criticism, they resort to the most extraordinary hypothesis, such as in common life an idiot, much less a wise man, would hardly receive. A heated imagination imposes upon the stern, clear-minded, matter-of-fact John such a scene as this! And John henceforth acts upon it as the supernatural testimony of God! Jesus, too, is wholly mistaken! He, too, is imposed upon! And he and John continue to impose a fiction upon the world as a great truth! I do not see why, in the same way of false assumption, every fact in history may not

be juggled out of existence. The little corporal, Napoleon, at twenty-six years of age did not shake the thrones of Europe to their foundations by his cannon. It's all a fiction that three millions of people successfully resisted fifteen, some eighty years ago, in this land. Nay, it is not necessarily a fact that you are hearing me preach to-night supernaturalism, for there is no such thing; and when you leave this house it will all be a matter of mere memory, about which you may be mistaken. For remember that there is no more reason why a man should be mistaken about a visible fact or heard word, whose origin is supernatural, than there is that he should be mistaken about any other facts in his daily life. Facts are facts, and testimony is testimony, however the facts be originated. And when men assume that God has never done anything supernatural in this world, they are compelled to deny the plainest facts, authenticated by the highest testimony man can receive. Now, dismissing this false and degrading assumption, let us look at this scene from the Christian stand-point. It is a fact that Jesus is Messiah, and is about publicly to enter upon that work which all men see and know has changed the character and destiny of the world. It is a fact that John is his prophet-messenger, whose words have already moved the hearts of millions with hopes of Christ's speedy coming. It is a fact that at some time, in some way, Christ was made known to John, and by him manifested to Israel. - And this is the time; this, the way. The appearance of Jesus; the recognition of his superiority by John; the words of Christ, in keeping with his whole character; the feelings of John, in perfect consistency with his character; Christ in prayer; the

open heavens; the Holy Spirit symbolized in the form of a dove, gentle, pure, lovely; those wondrous words mortal man never originated: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased"—and how grand and fitting an inauguration is this of Messiah in his office before men! How all the parts harmonize with the characters, the purpose, and the result! When I study the works of God, a flower, a tree, the human body or the soul, I see design and wisdom in this adaptation of part to part, of means to ends, and I behold here the finger of a personal God. And where, in this higher realm of the spiritual, I see the same harmony of all the parts, the same adaptation of means to ends, I am compelled to recognize here the special handiwork of God. Human reason, however affected, can not of itself create these sublime harmonies, harmonies deeper and higher than those of nature, any more than man can create a star, a sun, a universe of harmonious orbs. Here is the fit inauguration of Jesus in his public Messianic work. Nothing more fitting, nothing more grand, nothing more unlike the work of man in all history. There commenced the formal public ministry of him whose name henceforth is to be more potent than armies; whose words are to be the world's light; whose works are to bear at every point the impress of divine wisdom, love, and power; whose kingship untold millions are to recognize, and whose death is to be the birth throes of redemption for our lost humanity.

A question has also been started as to the time when the full consciousness of his mission took possession of the humanity of Jesus. And some have not hesitated to affirm that here at the baptism the

Holy Ghost for the first time rested upon him in fullness, and to his soul communicated the knowledge of his real nature and the premonitions of his great work. With most men who have been called to a ministry of special richness and power in the church, you can discover a period in their lives when the consciousness of their power blazed up within them, and anticipations of their future suddenly filled and lightened through their minds. Luther at Erfurt, Calvin, Knox, Whitefield, Wesley, and others of the reformers, greatly successful ministers of the truth, pass through such an experience, when the fullness of a divine baptism is poured upon them, and they rise to the consciousness of a special consecration to a special mission. But in the case of Jesus there is not in all his history the least intimation of any such experience. They were sinful men, renewed by the divine spirit, and animated by his presence to labor for their Lord. But in Christ the sinless, the divine worked in mysterious harmony with the human, awakening, as the soul was fitted for it in its successive growth, the consciousness of the wonderful union and the infinite purpose, till it was filled with all the conscious fullness of God. There could be here no sudden illumination of a precedent darkness, for the darkness never existed. Rather must it have been the light brightening with the expanding powers until those powers were fully developed. He, who, at twelve years of age, felt that he must be about his Father's work, did not wait till he was thirty years old to know what that work was. No! It was with him from the cradle; it mingled with his earliest thoughts and aspirations; it filled him at his daily toil with the

consciousness of his mysterious mission, and he only waited the fitting hour and way to take his position and accomplish the fulfillment of prophecy. Not for him was the baptism, and the open heavens, and the descending dove, and the voice of God. These were the divine attestations to John, his prophet, that he, in fulfilling his mission, might point him out to the people, with all the authority of prophetic inspiration, as the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world. Thus assured, in all his subsequent ministry he bare record, this is the Son of God.

Here, then, in this scene is the first supernatural manifestation of Christ as Messiah subsequent to his birth. But it is not the last. We are now to trace the life of this wonderful being, illuminated at every step by truths of divine wisdom and works of divine power. We shall see him as man triumphing over temptation, weeping and praying, suffering. We shall see him as God, teaching, organizing, working miracles. We shall see the light go out, seemingly forever, in the darkness of the cross; we shall see this life, bursting the bars of death and leading captivity captive, ascend to heaven.

And oh! when the angel of death darkens the door of our dwelling and bears from us the brightest objects of our earthly affections—yea, not only the aged, ripe in years for the garner of the Lord, but the youthful Christian, when the cup of earthly happiness mantles to the lips, ere the bridal wreath has faded, and the brightness of the sweetest of earthly unions is undimmed by a single sorrow, oh! then the heart in its agony turns for help to him who was baptized with our suffering, and went down into the

darkness of the sepulcher, and, leaving there all our sins, came forth triumphantly, crying, as he rose, "I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in me shall never die."

Last Sabbath eve I preached to you of the gain of death to the Christian; for the day before we had laid the dust of one strong in Christian manhood to rest until the resurrection. Yesterday again, with heavenly melodies soft and sweet, and words of divine hope, we laid the fair form of the young bride down among the flowers, and amidst the singing of birds, to await the hour when Jesus shall call the already sainted spirit, reanimate it, and raise it to attend the marriage supper of the Lamb. It is amidst such scenes we realize the preciousness of faith in him on whom the dove descended, and the voice from heaven declared, "This is my beloved Son." Oh! while we sympathize with those who mourn the departure of the loved, while we feel the nearness of death, let us rejoice that Jesus only took to himself our precious fold, already prepared for glory. Let us gird on our armor, and go forth with a more intense solicitude to bring to Christ the multitude who, living without faith, are only ripening for the sorrows of a death that knows no end.

## VIII.

## THE TEMPTATION (NO. 1)—THE DIVINE AND HUMAN.

*“And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.”—John i, 14.*

IN discoursing to you on the life of Christ, we have passed from his supernatural birth up to the time when at his baptism he was fully recognized as the Messiah. At this point he appears before us in his full maturity. From this time his public ministry, as the divine Redeemer, commences. Henceforth and forever he is to be the living center of humanity. From him history is to take its departure. In him religion has its true life; and by him all systems of human faith are to be tried. From this time the true light, that is to enlighten every man that cometh into the world, breaks forth in its divine splendor. The life of Jesus now opens to us the astonishing paradox of the divine Son in our humanity; of two natures, infinitely removed from each other as the separate poles of being, yet brought together and acting as one person—the infinite word dwelling in flesh. We can not now take a step forward in this life without seeing these two natures revealing themselves. This often strikes us strangely, mysteriously, as it did multitudes who saw and heard Jesus. The outward contest be-

tween infinite power and human weakness; infinite knowledge and limited intelligence; a nature divine that can neither be tempted nor suffer, and a human nature subject to both, at first perplexes; because we see not the secret harmony of this union, nor the mode in which it is constituted. Yet we have the key that unlocks the secret of this unique person in our text—The word made flesh.

Just here, as we are entering upon this mysterious phase of Christ's life—his temptation—it seems to me fit we should dwell on this subject, and, as far as we can, attain clear views of the sphere of these two natures, their relations to each other and their mutual action and reaction on each other. If we are successful in this, then much of the perplexity and vagueness that embarrass the minds of many Christians will be removed. I do not mean by this that we can understand the mode of this union, any more than we can fathom the mystery that envelopes the union of spirit and body in man, or the mystery of life anywhere. But there are certain facts characteristic of this union which we can understand, and other analogous facts which may throw some light on the operation of these two natures in one person.

Starting now with the human side, the first fact to be noticed is, that Christ's humanity was complete. He possessed the body and the soul, the intellect, the affections, the will, the activities, and the passivities; the entire constitution of a man. In himself he substantiates the perfect ideal of our humanity. This fact is so fully declared in Scripture, and so generally accepted the world over, that I need not dwell upon it.

2. I must remark, that this humanity must unfold

itself in harmony with the laws and under the limitations rightly belonging to this human nature. There is nothing in this union of the divine with the human that supersedes this kind of development or renders it unnecessary. Indeed, it was essential to the very object for which God is manifest in flesh, since only thus could Christ fully take upon him our nature and be made subject to law and suffering. He was an infant, nourished at his mother's breast, like any other infant, and displaying all the artless ways and gleams of new-born intelligence that shed such tenderness, sweetness, and attractiveness around our infancy. So his body grew to the ripe stature of manhood, just as other bodies grow, gradually developing all physical powers in accordance with the same laws and conditions that regulate and limit our growth. His intellect and his affections ripen in the same way; not by a sudden leap, springing into maturity, but quietly advancing, idea added to idea, conclusion to conclusion, meeting and overcoming difficulties, exercising the will in application, in study, in the regulation of all powers of mind and heart, and in all the appropriate duties and labors of his condition. This kind of growth is expressly affirmed of him in Scripture, "And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man." So far as his humanity was concerned he was subject to the same laws of growth and life that characterize human nature everywhere.

3. Christ, being thus constituted, was liable to suffer. His body, like any other human body, was sensitive to pain. Fire would burn him; the nails driven into his hands and feet would cause exquisite suffering. His whole physical organism was alive with nervous sen-

sibility. He was equally capable of suffering in his soul. His moral and social sensibilities were most acute and tender. The sight of evil and of sin pained him, revolted him. The grief, the misery of others stirs his compassion. The tears that he shed at the grave of Lazarus, that he wept over Jerusalem, reveal the sensitiveness of his soul to suffering. To suffer was essential to his mission, and so his whole humanity lay open on every side to its assaults. Its very perfection, its pure and delicate nature, enabled him to become the chief sufferer of all the sons of Adam.

4. I remark now, that Christ in his humanity was liable to temptation. He had in himself all the *original* appetites, passions, and desires belonging to our nature. As a complete man, these were in him in their full, original perfection. He was gifted with a will free to indulge them. There was nothing in him that thrust him out of the sphere of our nature and compelled him to move in another. His mission obliged him to occupy our sphere, and he did occupy it with all its trials and exposures. This is expressly asserted where it is said "He was tempted in *all points* like as we are." This involves the possibilities of sin. For a temptation, without the possibility of sin, is no temptation at all. There must be desires to be addressed and a will able to comply, or you might as well offer food to a stone. Jesus Christ in his human nature came for the express purpose of being one with us in our temptations; to feel with us all these natural impulses, and to illustrate before our eyes the conquest which a pure soul gains over sin.

5. To complete this summary of Christ in his humanity, I add the perfection of his character. Tempted

as we are, "he is without sin." He dwells habitually in the presence, and is filled with the love of God. His life is the loftiest ideal of a perfect humanity. All the perfections, the grandeur, and the simplicity, the inward emotions and the outward manifestations of them, which man can imagine as characteristic of a holy being, are combined in him. With singular unanimity, friends and foes for two thousand years have placed him above all others of the race. The exceptions are so few that they are not worth mentioning. Even Theodore Parker, ready enough as he was to assail the living and the dead, even when in his pitiful self-conceit he imagined himself superior to Jesus in knowledge, never ventured to asperse *his* character. Where the Scriptures place him in unapproachable purity of life, the world places him. Time, that tries all things, joins with Pilate in the solemn affirmation, "I find no fault in *him*."

Here, then, we have in Christ a perfect humanity; he is your brother, prepared to sympathize with and suffer for you. In his mission to this world he took not on him the nature of angels, but the nature of man. The word was made flesh. He was in the form of God; took the form of a servant. I pass now to consider the other side of our subject—*The divine nature in its union with our nature in the person of Jesus Christ.* The word that was God is made flesh. The divine Son of God is united to our nature. This is a true, real union, constituting one harmonious person. Language can not make this more emphatic than it is made in the text. The *word* is actually *made* flesh, made one organically with our humanity. The mode of this union is wholly beyond our reason now, and therefore we are

not called upon to believe anything about it. But the fact of such a union is easily apprehended, and its relations to our redemption readily understood and have been by millions since Christ appeared. Fifty years ago Unitarianism in Boston refused to recognize Christ as the divine Son of God, ostensibly because this doctrine did not accord with *their* reason; really, because they could not comprehend it. As if a man could live in this world without believing ten thousand things wholly beyond his comprehension. Now, however, a large class of philosophers, following this same reason as they think, have swung clear round to the opposite pole, and are ready to believe anything because it is incomprehensible. Nay, so far have they gone in their sublimated reason, that instead of one divine person incarnate, they count all men divine, yea, even the brutes and the trees and the world, all, with man, are the only God. One of these men, living not a thousand miles from Boston, imagines that when he walks abroad the trees nod to him, the divinity in them salutes the divinity in him; and he might, on the same principle, have added, that every donkey he meets brays to him in recognition of a common brotherhood. To such enormous extravagancies do men proceed when they reject the Scriptures as the true rule of faith and practice, and set up reason as superior. Let us ever remember these facts: 1st. That reason has its own sphere, and that every man is responsible for its right use within this sphere. 2d. That reason apprehends as facts, and acts upon them daily, a thousand things in nature and life which it can not fully understand. The existence of God as a wise, holy, omnipotent, omniscient sovereign; creation; the union

of soul and body ; generation and reproduction all over the earth ; time ; eternity ; life ; physical and mental organization ; yea, almost everything the eye sees or the ear hears or the hands handle are of this character. And it is worse than a mistake, it is the most atrocious folly and wickedness to accept this principle as fundamental to our earthly life and reject it in reference to the vastly higher subject of our spiritual life—to demand that God in his word shall make known to us no fact that reason can not fully understand, while in creation he has acted uniformly on an opposite principle. If he should do so, these persons would turn round and affirm that the Bible was the work of a simpleton, and only meant for babes.

Now, this grand fact, the Word made flesh, meets us at the opening of the gospel, meets us at every step as we advance in it ; in various ways it flashes upon us, and without it the life and words and mission of Jesus are an unsolved enigma, without purpose and without end. I accept this fact as revealed to the world by God himself, and rejoice unspeakably in the results which flow from it to me and to all who believe.

In observing this union, and the peculiar manner in which it is manifest, there are some things we may say, without attempting to be wise above what is written ; in other words, we may endeavor to interpret the facts as they come out in the life of our Savior. I feel, indeed, that great modesty and caution becomes us in conducting such a discussion ; that when we enter the divine sanctuary of this inner life of Jesus, we must take off our shoes, tread softly and reverently, while we pray Him that no word may be uttered or

thought expressed that is not in perfect harmony with the truth.

Feeling thus our need of divine guidance, we venture upon this unusual discussion, in the hope that while it stimulates thought, it may also assist in disembarassing this subject of some difficulties that are felt by many in practically recognizing this divine union in Christ.

First, then, I remark that in such a union of distinct natures it is self-evident that the inferior is wholly dependent upon the superior for the manifestation of itself; in other words, to use a philosophical expression, the superior conditions the inferior. The human nature of Christ is dependent upon the divine for such revelations as the latter may see fit to make. This union did not make the human soul divine; it did not take away its humanity; it left it in its own sphere, to receive such peculiar revelations and such light, such power as the divine Son in it saw to be best. This, I say, is self-evident; it is a universal law. The little child has a special dependence, in many respects, upon the parent. It is for the mother or father to give it such sustenance, such instruction, as in her or his judgment is suited to the age and capacities of a child. They are, in a sense, one—one family, one blood—peculiarly, though not organically, one in life. And it is God's constitution that the inferior in power and knowledge shall be dependent upon the will of the superior. A mere workman is in the same manner relatively dependent upon the man of genius and mental power to plan and organize what he may execute. Nor would it make a particle of difference if the soul of a Michael Angelo should be

united with the soul of one of his workmen in one body. God could put two souls of different capacities into one body as easily as he could one. In both cases the inferior would be dependent upon the superior. In dead matter, the larger mass has greater attractive power than the smaller. And so through all the realm of mind and matter this law holds good. Now, what I mean to affirm is, that the union of the divine nature with the human did not necessitate an absorption of the one into the other; that it left the humanity free in all its own proper action, while, as the inferior, it receives only such light and power as the divine Son chooses to impart.

This point being evident, then it follows that at one time there may have been a full communication of the divine nature to the human consciousness of Jesus, and at another a withdrawal of it. Such is the nature of this union, the divine thus conditioning and limiting the human, that the manifestation of the one to the consciousness of the other must have been wholly in the power and at the will of the former. Thus at one time it was true that the soul of Jesus was so full of this divine nature, his consciousness was so interpermeated and exalted by the sense of this blissful union, that he dwelt in heaven, in the immediate presence of God, in his bosom, and felt the divinity revealing itself to the innermost depths of his soul, and filling all its powers with its light and power. Then, again, this sense of the divine may have been withdrawn from his consciousness, and in deep darkness he may have felt the terror and the woe of an abandonment to his own poor, unsustained humanity. All the facts

in this mysterious life show that this must have been the character of the relation of the divine and human ; and, as we shall soon see, on this supposition every part of it, and all its most wonderful scenes, find a beautiful illustration.

To this I now add another remark—that the time and extent of this manifestation of the divine in the human consciousness of Jesus would be determined by the needs and necessities of his soul in view of the great purpose for which the word is made flesh. This purpose is to constitute him the Savior of the world. But in order to this, the humanity of Christ must pass through all stages of development, through temptations, trials, sufferings, victories ; for thus only is the great Captain of our salvation made perfect for his work. In this progress from ignorance to knowledge, from sorrow to joy, from the night and blight of earthly scenes to the triumphant day of the final glory, the necessities of his soul would greatly vary. Sometimes it must be left to its own naked self-determination, and sometimes it might be invigorated by the conscious union of God with man, and so all through it the varying discipline demands a corresponding variety in the conscious intercommunion of the divine nature with the human. And thus ever the necessities of this human soul in its preparation to be, and its actual work in becoming, the Savior of men, would be the measure of the divine communication to his conscious spirit of knowledge and strength.

And, finally, I remark, that the individual self, conscious of Christ's humanity, remains ever perfect. It is not lost nor absorbed but only exalted when it is filled with the sense of this union with the divine.

The Son of Man does not vanish in the Son of God, even when he is filled with the divine fullness and his nature is consciously pervaded and interpenetrated by the divine essence. If it were so, then his exaltation to the right hand of God would strip him of his conscious brotherhood with us, and he would cease to be the sympathizing brother and mediator who liveth forevermore.

Before I proceed to show you how the facts in the life of Christ warrant the statements here made and are in harmony with them, suffer me to say that the position of the objector to this doctrine of the word made flesh, is that of ignorance and not of knowledge. No man is authorized to say, from any knowledge he has of God or the soul, that such a union of the divine nature with our humanity might not take place, or that for the accomplishment of an object worthy of God, such as the illustration of his mercy in the salvation of men, it ought not and would not take place. It becomes us to be very modest in our assertions on this subject. Why, how little we know even of our souls and their capabilities! Facts come out now and then that, a few years ago, mental philosophers would have pronounced incredible. Take the fact that one person placed in contact with another, in certain conditions of the system, can will his thoughts into the mind of the other and yet both retain their own individual self-consciousness. Take the facts of double consciousness. Ask Dr. Gray, or Kelly, and he will tell you that, in certain diseased conditions, the same individual has one consciousness of a certain kind and another underlying it of a totally different kind. Take the case of Miss Reynolds, of Meadville, Pennsylvania.

The facts were related to me thirty years ago, by a classmate, her nephew, and have since been published by Dr. Plumer, in Harper's Magazine for 1860. When a girl, of some sixteen years of age, she awoke from sleep having lost all memory and all consciousness of her past life. She was a woman in body and capacity, but an infant in knowledge. She had to be retaught every thing. Again in sleep she passed back into her former state and awoke in the full consciousness of her former life. Thus she passed backward and forward from one state of consciousness to another, until she finally settled in her abnormal or secondary state; and the most remarkable fact attending it was that on her return to one state she entered into the same train of thought and feeling and act which she was following when she passed out, although months had sometimes intervened. Now what do you say to such facts? and how does it become you to be modest in talking about the nature of God and your own soul. That soul has capacities and powers you dream not of. Made in the image of God, it will live and develop forever. And if God has seen fit to become incarnate in humanity, by what light or power of reason can you affirm that it is false?

Let us now recall the points I have stated, and see how they harmonize with the life of Christ. Remember that we have in this union a complete sinless humanity, subject to the same laws, temptations, and sufferings which control and affect all our race, and that here the inferior is dependent upon the superior for divine manifestations to itself. Jesus in his infancy and childhood is truly and simply a sinless infant, a sinless child, though Lord of all. For then the

necessities of his life demanded, not the conscious presence of the divine, but the full and free play of all his human powers, according to the laws of growth and development. How soon the superior nature diffused the consciousness of this union through the young soul we can not tell. It may be that as the babe gradually wakes to the consciousness of a mother's love, as God sends the dawn before the sun, so this wonderful fact gradually dawned upon it. His answer to his mother in the temple indicates the consciousness of something unusual in his relation to the Father. But as his nature ripens into manhood, his heavenly, his divine part unfolds itself within him, until he comes to dwell in the very bosom of God.

Here, then, is a holy soul in conscious union with the divine nature. It is here on earth; sin, pain, disease, death, are all round it. Look where he will, the baleful form of sin is there. It throbs in the air; it walks the earth; it nestles in the heart. Listen when he may, the cries of suffering are in his ear. Standing in God's presence, he knows the course and end of justice. He is exquisitely sensitive to it all. He loathes, yet he pities. He feels this world of evil all round him; in his mind and heart he holds the infinite love of God. Then breaks in upon him the magnificent scheme of redemption, from his own divine nature. He is to suffer, he is to die, for the sins of men. The human soul, now irradiated by the light of God, freely consecrates itself to the work, and the Messiah is manifested to the world. Henceforth he bears about with him, on one side, the conscious dignity of God; on the other, the consciousness of a sufferer for the sins of men. Now he is led hither and thither,

through the mightiest temptations, by the Prince of Darkness; and now he speaks, and demons fly from him. Now he is wearied, and sleeps, and hungers; and now he stills the winds, and creates the food of thousands. Now he prays as a dependent; and now he affirms that he is in heaven. Now he weeps at the grave of Lazarus; and then he bids that grave give its dust back to life. Now he washes his disciples' feet; and then he says: "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." Now he declares that some things are hidden from him; and then that all power is committed to him. Now he weeps in agony in the garden; and then he heals with a touch the cleft ear of an enemy. Now he stands thorn-crowned and silent before Pilate; then he declares he has but to ask, to will, and legions of angels would flash their terrible brightness upon his foes. Now he is on the mount of transfiguration; and now he is girt round with the terrors of hell. Now he hangs a tortured, bleeding sufferer upon the cross; and then he converts a malefactor, and opens paradise to his departing spirit. Now he feels the consciousness of divine abandonment as he sinks under the sins of men; and now he cries in triumph "it is finished." Now his body lies in the embrace of death; and now, with divine life, he re-enters it. Now he walks to the top of Olivet; and then he rises to the right-hand of the Majesty on High. Thus, all through his wonderful life, these two natures, that formed this one person, God made flesh, appear in sublime contrast. These contrasts incessantly repeat themselves; you can not get round them, you can not ignore them, and be just to the original. You can not reconcile or harmonize the life of Jesus, except

on the principle of the text, that his person is composite, divine and human. All attempts to write or comprehend this life, from one side of it alone, always have been, and must be, failures; just as a physician who treats man as wholly animal, or wholly spiritual—or a philosopher who writes of humanity as subject to and developing under only one class of laws, and takes no notice of the action and reaction of the intellectual, the moral, and the physical—will fail in the comprehensiveness and the final truthfulness of his conclusions. The life of Christ is not a tissue woven of thread of silver alone, or gold alone. It is the commingling of the intense brightness of divinity and the intense darkness into which humanity sometimes sinks. The assumptions and the exercise of divine attributes are shaded off into the weakness and sorrow of the finite soul. To be in a position to attain just views of such a life, three things are essential: 1st. The recognition of the fact that he who was in the form of God took upon him the form of a servant, constituting the divine and human in one person. 2d. The relations of these natures to each other; the one as the superior, the other as the dependent. And 3. The grand object for which this union was consummated, the redemption of men. Lose sight of either of these things, and this life of Christ is not truly apprehended nor really known; the temptation in the wilderness is meaningless; the agony in the garden inexplicable, and the entire life of Christ a fearful discord in the universe. But take this position, on which the church has ever stood since he ascended, and this life is the life and light of the world, the source of human redemption, the sublime har-

mony of law, justice, and mercy, a living power of renovation descending into the corruption of the race, the radiant center of influence for the remolding man in the image of God, comforting him amidst his sorrows, purging away his pollutions, correcting his errors, enlarging and glorifying his intelligence, ministering a living impulse to his elevation and progress in a sublime life, giving supremacy to the kindred powers of love and faith in society, opening to him the gates of heaven and the final perfection of the sons of God. The wonders which the life of Christ has already wrought in the world, the revolutions it has inaugurated, the idolatries it has broken, the philosophies it has exploded, the darkness and superstition it has enlightened, the science it has created, the new and wondrous religious life it has breathed into millions, and the enterprises of faith for the conquest of the world it has started and maintained, the conflicts it has fought with all human and Satanic forces, and the amazing victories it has won, demonstrate this glorious fact in history—"The Word made flesh." Here to-night are many who, in their own rich experience, affirm the blessedness of this truth, "God manifest in flesh." To you and to me Christ holds a personal relation in his divinity and humanity; the one consecrating, ennobling, giving saving efficacy to the temptations, the obedience, and the sufferings of the other. Here to-night you feel the wondrous harmony, sublimity, and glory of this living Christ, and you say: "My Lord and my God! Henceforth my life shall be a sacrifice of faith and love to thee." And to you, men and women of the world, Jesus appeals to-night. Remember that only to those who received

him did he give the blessedness of becoming sons of God. Remember how the world in its pride and self-conceit knew him not, spat upon him, trod in wrath upon him, nailed him in midheavens to the tree—*him*, the loving, compassionate, suffering Son of God! Oh, my blessed, divine Redeemer! I was there with the world. I helped to drive the nails that pierced. And yet thou prayed for them. Thou hast forgiven me! And you, impenitent soul, standing here amidst the light of the gospel, yet rejecting the crucified, you too he waits to receive, to forgive, to bless with peace and joy and hope. The world is all you have or seek—a world that despises and deceives while it may flatter you; a world that will vanish away and leave you dark, hopeless, oppressed with sin, hastening to meet the appalling vision of judgment and a Savior rejected. What power of evil, what Satanic influence holds you fast in the chains of unbelief, and blinds your poor soul to the amazing realities of sin, judgment, redemption. Oh, sin! sin! how awful thy tyranny. Oh, Christ, my Lord! thou, thou only canst break its power, and draw these earth-bound souls to thy cross.

## IX.

THE TEMPTATION (NO. 2)—CHRIST LED INTO THE WILDERNESS.

*“And immediately the Spirit driveth him into the wilderness. And he was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted of Satan.”*—Mark i, 12, 13; Matth. iv, 1-11; Luke iv, 1-13.

THE baptism is over. Instantly the scene changes. Manifested to John as the Messiah, and thus seemingly ready for his work, instead of at once entering upon it, Jesus is removed from the eyes of men. Lying between the valley of the Jordan and Jerusalem there is a wild and rocky region. Wild beasts find a refuge in it. Human habitations are not there. Robbers sometimes haunted it. A place of desolation, of wild, rugged grandeur, terrible in aspect. From the excited throngs that gathered around the Baptist, Jesus passes into this lonely wilderness; he is hidden here as effectually as if he were in another land. For forty days he abides here in solitude before he again emerges into the world. This change startles by its abruptness; it is something no man would have ever thought of inventing. It puzzles exceedingly our humanitarian philosophers; it is so out of harmony with their preconceived notions of what the character of Jesus is or ought to be; the facts stated in connection with it are so evidently above their reach, that

they are driven to get rid of them as far as possible without destroying utterly the scene itself. As the silk worm spins his delicate fiber out of his bowels, so these men out of their brains spin beautiful theories to account for the temptation. Fortunately, like all men who take partial views, their speculations carry their own antidote. You read one, and it seems plausible, particularly if you do not compare it with the Scripture narrative; you read another, and it too is very pretty, but entirely different; you read another and another, and by that time you conclude they know nothing of Christ, for it would take a dozen different Christs to answer all the conditions of their diverse theories. They are clearly men out of position; you would think from their assumed confidence that they had been with Jesus when he discoursed with his disciples on these subjects, and had fairly seen the innermost workings of his soul. But when you compare the results they reach with each other and with the Scripture, you are perfectly convinced that they know nothing of the subject they are writing about. They are outside and in too low a position to understand Jesus at all. A parcel of idiots under Dr. Wilbur's training, at Syracuse, could attain more truthful views than these cultured and able minds, for this reason: they have not the key and the door is shut. A man outside of one of our factories sees men and women spinning, all in utter confusion. But let him once enter the building; see the great wheel communicating its impulse to every other wheel and spindle, and men and women each in his or her own place, and at once the confusion vanishes; order rises. The simple facts, seen from the right position, are

worth a thousand theories. These men have planted themselves outside the great facts of Christianity; they do not believe in the supernatural; they reject the divine mission of the Son of God; and from such a position they may busy themselves to all eternity in spinning theories like that of "Eece Homo," or Schenkel, or Strauss, or Hume, and the result will be only confusion, disorder, falsehood. Our business is to take the facts as we find them in the sacred narratives, and interpret them in the harmony of their relations and the grand end of Christ's life. These are the evidence, and all the evidence. If, in a court of law, a witness should draw on his imagination for his facts, he would be condemned to the state's prison for perjury, and rightly too. And when, in these matters of infinitely greater interest, a man deliberately puts aside the facts and substitutes his own baseless imaginations, he incurs the guilt and will receive the condemnation of him who both adds to and takes from the inspired word.

Let us, then, warned by the errors and failures of others, take the facts of this wonderful life, and endeavor to interpret them in harmony with themselves and the whole character and work of Christ.

1. The first point that demands attention is the peculiar influence under which Jesus makes this sudden transition from the Jordan to the desert. Matthew and Luke use substantially the same terms in describing it. He was led or conducted by the Spirit—the Holy Ghost. But Mark, more graphic, as is his wont, employs a more intense word—He is driven, or divinely impelled into the wilderness. A divine force is put upon him in opposition to his natural inclina-

tion. He uses the same term which is elsewhere employed in reference to the expulsion of demons from the bodies of men; so that here in the beginning of this scene we have the stamp of a divine power exerted to accomplish a divine purpose. It is to be accounted for wholly on supernatural principles. The key to its meaning is found in the single fact which meets us at the outset. This, however, puzzles and confounds the natural theorists. On their principles, the divine Spirit has no place here. They must account for everything on the low plane of human nature; and losing sight of this first and most significant fact, their speculations are worth no more than the paper on which they are written. It is obvious that when you set aside this divine influence, necessitating this scene in the wilderness, it is impossible, on natural principles, to account for it. It is said that at his baptism the idea first took possession of Jesus that he was to be a great reformer of the church, and he retired into the wilderness to mature his plans and prepare himself for his work. But the facts here are all assumed to harmonize with preconceived notions. How do they know that now for the first time such an idea entered the mind of Jesus? No such fact is stated in the narratives; the opposite is very plainly indicated. But why should Christ enter into the wilderness for forty days? He was no ascetic; his life and temperament and training were wholly unlike those of the Baptist. He mingled with men; he was free, genial, social, delighting in all the sweet relationships of human society. His nature was all attuned to the tender harmonies of social life. He had, indeed, his hours of retirement and devotion, just as every human

soul that would live near to God in this world must have ; but they were short, and he soon returned to society. In his whole life there is nothing like this wilderness scene. On natural principles we should suppose that when he had once been publicly recognized by his forerunner, he would immediately have addressed himself to his work. As the bugle call to the warrior, so the woes of humanity, in its sorrow and corruption, would have summoned him to enter at once upon the conflict. This would have been the natural impulse of his warm and earnest soul. But nature is overruled by the divine Spirit. A power mightier than nature, in opposition to all its tendencies, drives him out of the world of man into the wilderness. And this, utterly unaccountable on merely human principles, we shall see at length, is in entire harmony with the divine character he possessed and the divine work he was to perform among men. The divine power and purpose attends him at every step of his mission, and it is only by recognizing it we shall be able to unlock the mysteries and hear the harmonies of his grand life.

2. Now let us look at our second point—*the immediate purpose* for which he is thus driven into the wilderness. This is explicitly stated to be—*temptation, trial*. On this point the sacred writers are unanimous and emphatic. They leave nothing to be inferred and nothing to be added. It was not to form his plans for the future ; it was to be tempted. It was not for the direct purpose of prayer and communion with God ; it was trial. The divine act in compelling him to go there, and the divine purpose in it, flames forth distinctly in the sacred record and gives it a divine

harmony. Now, it is impossible that a pure being, independent of any call of duty, could, with his eyes open, have thus courted temptation. Jesus expressly makes part of the prayer he taught his disciples, the petition, "lead us not into temptation." He exhorts his disciples to watch against it. He could no more have gone self-impelled into such a scene than he would have entered, without cause, a furnace of fire. It was the divine will that bore him thither, for this one object. Our natural theorists and speculators see this clearly enough, and they deliberately proceed to get over it by putting it out of sight. Jesus goes into the wilderness merely to meditate and think over his future plans; and then, while thus employed, he is exposed to temptation. The temptation is not the purpose to meet which he is taken there; it is only an incident of his presence there. Now, this is to falsify history in order to suit a theory. It is to make your facts conform to your theory, and not your theory to the facts. It is as if a man should suppose the moon was made of cheese, and then pronounce the testimony given by the telescope to be worthless. It is as if a man should say the suspension bridge at Cincinnati was built on boats, and not hung on stone piers at either side of the Ohio. It is more than all this; it is a deliberate and wicked falsification of history; it is foisting into the life of the Redeemer human imaginations that do not belong to it, and putting out of it the very facts which the inspired witnesses record as essential to it. The witnesses, and the only possible witnesses in the case, tell us Christ went into the wilderness under the controlling and impelling influence of the Divine Spirit; these men say he went there on

his own motion. They say he was driven there expressly in order to be tried; these affirm he went there to meditate his plans of future action. Christ's life is treated very much as he was when on earth. Then Pharisee and Sadducee joined in misinterpreting his words, in crowning his head with thorns, and hanging his body on the cross. Our moderns crucify his historic life, spiking it to the cross with their miserable assumptions, and thrusting into it the spear of falsehood. Such conduct is simply atrocious. There is neither honesty, nor manliness, nor truthfulness, in it. Neither learning, nor wit, nor refinement of style, can redeem its authors from the guilt of dishonesty, insincerity, and moral perjury. Let us remember that the only authority in the world capable of testifying declares that the divine purpose in taking Christ into the wilderness was that he might be tempted. Here we rest on our second point.

3. I pass now to our third point—the temptation—with the design, hereafter, of discussing the several temptations by themselves. I shall limit myself here to some observations on the general subject: (1) This is a *true* temptation. Anything that is adapted to move the heart of man away from God, or that tends to lead us to substitute our will in the place of the divine, is a temptation. When a young man is considering the duty of personal religion, and the world with its present attractions urges him to take a course independent of God—this is a temptation. It is God's will that every person shall keep his thoughts and heart pure, and hold the family relation sacred; when then, opportunities present themselves for the indulgence of passion in violation of this law, they consti-

tute a temptation. Now what the sacred narratives affirm is, that Christ was placed in just such circumstances; that there was brought to bear upon him influences adapted to lead him to substitute his human will and pleasure in the place of the divine will and pleasure. In other words, this is no imaginary, but a real temptation; just such as humanity is called 'to meet everywhere. In him our humanity, without sin, was tried by the temptation to sin. The second Adam is tried as was the first.

(2) Consider next the special conditions of the temptation. These are two: the practical isolation of Christ from human society, and the fasting for forty days. These conditions are bound up with the temptation, so as to form with it a connected whole. Mark and Luke expressly state this when they speak of Christ as being tempted for forty days. You can not separate this wilderness life of fasting from the temptation. Christ could have fasted elsewhere; he could be and subsequently was tempted in the midst of human society. But now both these conditions must be united with the temptation. There is a divine significance in them. I only bring out this significance. I only logically and fairly interpret these facts, when I say they were designed to give full effect to the temptation; to place the humanity of Christ in a position to be tried and tested in the fullest manner. Every one knows that the power of temptation varies indefinitely with the circumstances and conditions of life. A beggar might be mightily tempted to do that which the same person in the possession of thousands would scorn; a miser may let go his gold to save his life; a profligate may

be virtuous amidst scenes of sorrow and death. The conditions in which a man is placed give force or weakness to temptation. Hazeel is loyal enough before the prophet ; when circumstances changed, he became a traitor and a regicide. I might speculate here on the influence of these conditions on the pure soul of Jesus ; but I will not. As an interpreter of the facts, all that is needful for me to state, or you to know, is, that they found the conditions for the most effective trial of our humanity in Christ Jesus. God ordered this temptation in just these circumstances for the purpose of making it most effective. To this end they were essential, and so, in the sacred narrative, they are all logically and fitly bound together, as one comprehensive whole. Our Sadduceean theorists separate them—ignore the first and speculate only on the second. In so doing, they only illustrate the falsity of their criticism, and the willfulness of their unbelief.

(3) Here let us notice that the specific temptations recorded are all addressed to natural principles, or to susceptibilities and desires that belong to our nature. The bodily appetites ; the desire of reputation ; the love of power, and the desire to exercise it ; all enter into our humanity. They were all in Adam before he fell. They constitute in part the happy elements of our original nature. In itself, that constitution is just as pure, just as good, as that of the angels. Neither the possession nor the indulgence of them is necessarily sinful. God made man upright, and his handiwork is perfection. Sin lies in the indulgence of them contrary to the divine will ; it is man assuming the right of supremacy, and putting himself on God's throne ; it is self-will carrying it over the will of the Creator,

and making man himself his law and his end. Holiness is just the opposite. It is man submitting his will to that of his Heavenly Father ; man controlling and directing all his powers in harmony with this divine constitution. Neither sin nor holiness is in the desires and susceptibilities of his nature. Sin, indeed, in its reflex influence, has affected them, exaggerating, intensifying them into uncontrolable lusts. But originally it was not so ; in Christ's pure nature it was not so. These were in him in all their original purity and harmony. He was not an angel lifted above our sphere. He was here in our nature, possessed of our humanity. And just here was the point of assault for temptation ; just here man at first was assailed, and here he fell. Here, on those human susceptibilities and desires, Satan concentrates all his devilish power. He does not address him as angel ; he comes down to his humanity ; and recognizing in him the Son of God in our nature, he aims to defile and dishonor that nature by enslaving its pure and innocent desires to his own devilish yoke. And the conditions in which Christ was placed gave the highest power to those temptations. His utter isolation, his protracting fasting, the pangs of hunger, the sense of weakness in his humanity while yet united with that which was divine, opened his soul to the assaults of the tempter. This fact diminished, if it did not annihilate, the distance created by his holiness between his nature and ours in respect to the susceptibility of temptation. It placed him more perfectly on our level, and thus, while standing erect in his sublime purity, it brought him more perfectly into sympathy with our fallen humanity. He was tempted just as we are ; he felt

the same solicitations to evil indulgence that we feel ; the same subtle temptations assailed him that are at work in us. But this is the amazing difference between us—we yield, while he repels ; we let sin enter, while he puts his foot upon the tempter and treads him in the dust.

In this connection permit me to notice a form of statement on this subject which seems to me adapted to make an erroneous impression. It is sometimes said that the temptation was not *inward* ; that it was wholly without the soul of Christ. Now, there can not be a temptation that is not inward ; otherwise, it is no temptation at all. If it is meant that the temptation did not originate in Christ himself, the sentiment is true, but the form of statement exceedingly defective. Sin lies in the disposition or the purpose. And the very design of Satan was to create this disposition and form this purpose in the pure mind of Jesus. The temptation came from without. But if it is meant that in Christ there were no desires which temptation could address, the statement is false. The appetites were innocent, the desires were innocent, and their objects were good in themselves. And the whole purpose of Satan was to lead Christ to gratify them independently of the divine will ; to make that which was good minister to sin. Jesus penetrates the design ; he repels the temptation ; he will not have the good unless it is stamped with the divine signature. He crucifies self-will. He denies himself. He moves not the shadow of an inclination off from the appointed path of obedience. And thus he became to us our leader, the Captain of our Salvation.

4. We come now to the discussion of our fourth

point, and the only one remaining for us to consider at this time. What is the object or import of this scene in the wilderness? To comprehend this, we must rise above the low and limited conception of earthly minds to those grand and comprehensive views which Jesus unfolds in his teachings and illustrates in his life. There is a kingdom of heaven, and there is a kingdom of this world. The one is a kingdom of light, the other of darkness; the one is full of holiness, the other of sin; one is harmony, the other is discord; one is life, the other is death; one is divine, the other is devilish. Christ represents to the spirit, the aims, the life of one, and Satan those of the other. These kingdoms are in perpetual conflict. One is struggling to lift man nearer to God, the other to keep him separate forever. One opens the portals of heaven to our fallen humanity, the other opens the gates of hell. One seeks to bring the human will into obedience to and harmony with that of God, the other enthrones self-will, and would make man the slave of his own rampant and misdirected passions. One is redemption from the power and punishment of sin; the other is slavery, condemnation, death eternal. Jesus Christ represents redemption, holiness, life, the kingdom in which God is supreme, and man and angels his harmonious, loving, trusting, happy, subjects. For this he became incarnate in our humanity. To win this victory for us he assumes our nature. For it is Christ as man who is to fulfill all the conditions of a full deliverance. It is in and through the same nature that has fallen, resistance is to be made to the powers of darkness that precipitated the fall. Christ, in a pure human soul, is to fight the battles of

humanity, suffer its condemnation, endure its struggles and sorrows, in order to triumph over the Prince of this world, and, as the Captain of Salvation made perfect through sufferings, lead many sons to glory. Here in the wilderness, at the opening of Christ's public ministry, in circumstances most favorable to the tempter, the representatives of these two kingdoms stand face to face. There is here a marshaling of forces for the determination of a question of world-wide interest; the beginning of a personal conflict which, in its final issues, involves the salvation of millions. Milton, in his grandest descriptions, never rose to the sublimity of this scene. There is here no shout of soldiers rushing to battle, no sulphurous cloud of smoke and flame, no clash of deadly steel. This battle is within the soul. Nature, in her wild and rugged forms, is silent. Alone, all alone, Jesus, conscious of his wondrous mission, meets the mighty prince of darkness, repels his every assault, and presents his whole humanity a living sacrifice to God. Legions of angels watch with breathless interest the progress of the conflict. Then Jesus began that succession of victories over the powers of darkness, which culminated after the agony on the cross in those words of lofty triumph—"It is finished."

Let us now descend from this general view to some of its more important elements. (1.) Christ here illustrates obedience to the *law* of God. The aim of the tempter is to induce him to substitute his own will in place of the divine. This he effected in the case of our first parents. This ruined the race; this accomplished in Jesus, redemption is impossible; the Messiah is the subject of Satan; the supremacy of the

kingdom of the world is established. But Christ stands erect in his obedience; he yields his whole life to God. He refuses independence. He is God's child; God's will is his law now and forever. Then that broken, outraged law of the kingdom of heaven asserted its supremacy over a loving, obedient humanity. Then its mission as man's rule, the harmony of his powers, the inspiration of his life, was gloriously illustrated. Henceforth one human soul, amidst all the temptations of earth, shines forth in all the loveliness, the harmony of a perfect obedience. I say one human soul illustrates resistance to sin and perfect obedience to God. Bear in mind what I sought to impress upon you in my last discourse, that in the union of the divine and human, the superior nature must leave the inferior free to do all the work assigned it. And so our humanity, represented in Christ Jesus, in the full enjoyment of its own self-conscious freedom, with all its susceptibilities to temptation, with all our original powers and affections in free play, intelligently comprehending the relations of man to God, indulgence and self-denial, independence and submission, stood erect in its integrity, and, in the power of a will fixed in obedience, bid the tempter defiance. The relations of this temptation to the law and redemption are fundamental. Christ in a perfect humanity obeys the law for us; Christ, in an obedient humanity, suffers the penalty for us. Here begins the triumph of law, the preparations for the satisfaction of justice. And as it begins so it ends. This life through all its varied scenes and contrasted states is a sublime harmony. Its key note is redemption, its sublime air is obedience; its deep bass is suffering; its

inspiration is love; and millions of the redeemed around the throne spontaneously celebrate it in the song of the Lamb.

(2.) But there is one other thought which shows the import and purpose of this scene in light to us peculiarly encouraging and bright. There is one passage of Scripture it illustrates most vividly—a passage which once instilled in our experience abides in the heart as a spring of refreshment amidst all the trials of life. “For we have not an high priest that can not be touched (sympathize) with our infirmities, but who was tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin. Wherefore let us come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in every time of need.” Here in the wilderness he obtains part of that experience which made him your sympathizing brother and high priest. Here, in the hour of his weakness, he is assailed by all the arts of the prince of darkness. For you he is tempted; for you he is tried; for you his soul passes through these stern experiences; for you he is beset by enemies fiercer than bulls of Bashan, more ravenous than wolves, more deadly and malignant than adders. He bore your humanity, your weaknesses, your trials in his soul. You, in all your appalling wretchedness and sin, were in his thought and in his heart when he subjected himself to this conflict. For you he fought this battle; in your place he endured temptation; you with all your trials were with him in the wilderness; for you he won the victory. Temptation was not necessary to develop his character in holiness; it is for you. He is tempted that he may succor and sympathize with you in your temptations. These are the

conditions of your life on earth ; solicitations to sin meet you at every step. They spring up within ; full armed they assail us from without. They steal into our chambers in the hour of sorrow ; and the stricken heart accuses God. They mingle in our social joys ; and eternal things are veiled. They are in our studies, in our shops, in our stores, ever saying to us : thou shalt not die. Through these you must pass ; over these to heaven, or with these to hell, you must march. How shall thy poor, faint, silly heart triumph over such antagonists led on by Satan ? Only as he who led captivity captive—as he, who in this wilderness fought the battle and won the victory, puts his arm around you and breathes his spirit into you, will you find the strength that conquers, and win the crown of life.

Some here to-night feel not the full force of this truth. Ye are young ; ye are strong ; ye are hopeful. Difficulties you scorn. In manly independence, ye are resolved to fight your own battle of life. Ah ! ye know not who and what ye have to meet ; how subtle, how strong are your enemies without ; how great is the enemy within your own deceitful heart.

## X.

## TEMPTATION (NO. 3)—THE TEMPTER.

*“Being forty days tempted of the DEVIL.”—Luke iv, 2.*

THE idea of the existence of fallen, evil spirits, outside of humanity, is not peculiar to the Christian Revelation. This truth has been recognized in all ages and among all peoples. It matters not what was their condition, whether civilized or barbarous, learned or ignorant, in some form this doctrine has had its place in their convictions, and has exerted a decided influence upon their worship. The form in which the conviction was clothed may and does differ, but the conviction itself, so far as we can know, is universal. You find it alike among the nations settled around the original centers of civilization, and in those that have wandered into the forests of this continent. Now all universal beliefs must be traced to one of two sources—either (1) to the constitution of the human mind, which, in the ordinary working of society, necessitates their formation; or (2) to an original revelation, made to the race at its beginning, and preserved with more or less vividness by tradition. According to the first, the condition of mankind, the outbreakings of evil from it, generates infallibly or inevitably the belief that there are powers of evil superior to man invested with a certain influence upon him. According to the second, the fall itself, known to all nations, was at-

tended with the revelation of the fact that this fall was in consequence of man's yielding to this evil influence, which he might have resisted. It seems to me the latter is the true supposition, because it both harmonizes with the word of God and fully accounts for all the facts to which history testifies. But on either supposition the doctrine must be true, or either God or nature is a lie. Given the idea of evil spirits, whether by original revelation or by the necessary operations of the human mind, and you can at once account for all the forms in which it presents itself. For while the human mind has no power absolutely to create an idea, since it must be either native to itself or presented by the phenomena of nature, when once an idea has been given, then it may exaggerate, or diminish, or multiply, or combine it with other ideas. Thus the idea of God, once given, no matter how, then the mind can change, or multiply, or clothe it with human passions, just as it has done. The unbeliever, therefore, has, at the outset, to account for this universal belief in evil spirits, and that, too, on some principle as broad as the facts themselves. The Christian recognizes in it the truth of revelation, in the statements with which it opens, the first leaf of that divine history of the origin and fall of man.

To the existence of a superior order of intelligences, there never has been, and there never can be, any just objection made. The creative power of God is adequate to the peopling of the universe with beings as various as the infinite variety of material objects. Only the divine wisdom limits the divine power. That wisdom is its own judge of what is fit and best for this power to accomplish. The reason of man has no foothold in

this superior sphere. It can only receive the indications, hints, the partial gleams of light, suggesting to it the existence and some of the transactions of that sphere. It is out of its power to sit in judgment upon it; as much so as it would be to measure the size of the apocalyptic angel, who is to stand with one foot on the land and one on the sea and pronounce the knell of *Time*. Man may, as I have already hinted, from the systematic and gigantic developments of evil on earth, infer that there are some superior powers in alliance with the sinful hearts of men, but he can only *know* this from the direct assurances given him in a divine revelation. These intelligences, whether for evil or good, assume no sensible forms, unless specially permitted of God; they move among us noiselessly in their ministrations; and though we may feel their influence, yet it breathes itself upon us so quietly that it seems often to be only the product of our own creative energy. Here man can not judge of what God may or may not rightly do, and it is only from a divine revelation he can fully know.

Now, on this subject this book, which we accept as the word of God, is singularly clear and decisive. It declares to us the existence of such a class of intelligences. It describes them in their personality, distinguishing them broadly from man and the powers of nature. It attributes to them all the attributes of personality and intelligence, will, affections, powers. It gives some of their names, expressive of their characters—Michael, who is as God, a prince; Satan, the adversary; the Devil, the accuser. It tells of the love and joyful obedience of one class; of their delight in God and holiness; of their interest in the

progress of the Redeemer's kingdom, and their outburst of praise at his birth; and of their joy over the conversion of sinners; their worship of God and the Lamb, and their agency in the final destruction of this world. It describes to us the malignity of another class; their opposition to man; their evil influence; their fall; their condemnation; it tells us of those who kept not their first estate, who through the indulgence of pride fell, who ever since the creation of man have been engaged in constituting the kingdom of the world in opposition to the kingdom of heaven. So wicked are they and so intent on the ruin of man, that the names of their chiefs have become synonyms of evil, expressions for intense wickedness; to say that a thing is satanic or devilish, is to say that it is worthy of the devil and is most intensely wicked. And the attempt to interpret these superior intelligences out of the Bible, and crowd legions of fallen and unfallen spirits into every human soul, is if they were only good and bad thoughts and feelings, is the merest jugglery of words. Such a process would exorcise all sin, all pain out of the world. It would prove that there is no punishment and no Christ in the Bible; it might equally well demonstrate that there is no God there; yea, it could go so far as to show that the Bible itself was never written at all, and is after all only an appearance. People who can swallow such an enormous imposition as this, would worship Simon Magus if he were here, and instal an Indian conjuror as their household deity. Oh! for a little manhood in man; a little, only a little common sense and common honesty in the treatment of this holy book! Yes, here God opens to us a vista

into another sphere of his vast kingdom; he gives us glimpses of other beings and powers above and around us, that the eye of sense discerns not; he reveals personal forces of light and darkness struggling for dominion; antagonistic angels in a spiritual world, interested in man, and, within the limits set by his divine wisdom, influencing him for good or evil.

There are, however, two points on which the objectors take their stand, and from which they seek to discredit this part of the revelation of God. How, say they, could angels fall? How could pure spirits, intelligent and happy in their holy sphere, break away from the love of God and assume an attitude of opposition to one infinite in power? Suppose we answer, we can not tell; what does this prove? Only our ignorance. Does it disprove the asserted fact? Has any man risen to such a comprehension of these angelic natures; has any one of us attained such an insight into the process of thought and motive in these high intelligences as to warrant him in affirming that it was impossible for them to sin? And is our ignorance a fit argument to set off against a fact of divine revelation? Why, men of undoubted science once affirmed that if this earth revolved we should all be thrown off into space; men of science once said you never could traverse the ocean with steamships; and these were subjects properly within the sphere of human knowledge. But the earth does revolve, and our houses do not fly off into space; steamships do traverse the ocean and compass the globe. And shall our ignorance of things in another sphere, of which no human science can teach us anything, stand for an instant as an opposing argument, when God sees fit to

part the clouds above us and let us see a little of these wondrous transactions which have occurred, and are now occurring there? When will men learn to treat God and his word with common honesty, and cease to take leave of the ordinary principles of reasoning the moment they enter the vestibule of his spiritual temple?

But this is not the whole of our answer. There is one stubborn fact in the world; a fact which meets us everywhere; a fearful, sad fact; it is *sin*. Here it is in every heart, speaking from millions of tongues, burning in millions of souls and cursing their bodies. How came it here? The only answer, unless you make God the author—a blasphemy too horrible to think of for an instant—the only answer is, that man fell; fell from the estate of holiness and purity in which he was created; fell when life eternal was offered him; fell amidst the beauty and the glory of a virgin world. And if man could fall, why not angels? If an incarnate soul may fall, why may not a pure spirit? The fact is, that all the most stubborn and unresolvable difficulties in theology center at last in the existence of sin; and this is a fact which Christian and infidel, men of all creeds or of no creed, have to meet. It is not a matter of revelation merely; it is a matter of experience and observation, as much so as pain, or disease, or death. The atheist, in consequence of it, denies the existence of God; the pantheist denies his personality, and makes sin itself a part of his natural development; the Christian refers its permission to a wisdom which now he is too ignorant and too undeveloped and on too low a plane fully to compass. This fact, however, sweeps away all the theo-

logical or philosophical objections to the fall of angels. That fact God's word affirms; and it is with the fact alone and not with the how, that we have any thing to do.

If we were inclined to speculate on this general subject, we might suppose with a late writer that the pre-adamite world, the world whose history is folded up between the first and second verses of the first chapter of Genesis, but a part of which is written on the structure of our present earth; we might suppose, I say, that that world had a spiritual as well as a physical history. It was a world of enormous vegetable production, of gigantic animals, of titanic forces. It may have been the locality, the home of the angels, where they passed their probation and where a portion of them fell; there may have occurred scenes of terrible antagonism between the evil and the good, such as Milton's imagination in its sublime creations has failed to conceive. Then when they who stood firm in their glorious allegiance were transported into the upper sanctuary, the terrible edict went forth, the subterranean fires upheaved, burst forth; then in turn the ocean rolled its waters over continents; then chaos came, and night, and death, till the creative spirit again moved upon it, and order, and light, and life resumed their reign, and man entered upon his domain and began his probation. And then and since these gigantic spirits of evil have lived in the fires of their malignity, in the darkness of despair, in the chains of their fore-doomed perdition, permitted by a wisdom, one day to be vindicated sublimely, to tempt the race of humanity, and to fight another battle in which the incarnate Christ shall bring forth judgment unto vic-

tory. This, however, is in part a speculation, and we have mentioned it only to indicate the fact that in the future there are histories of the past for man to read, of which in this state of being we have only here and there a broken fragment—yet fragments such as could only belong to a grand and wondrous system, a magnificent and sublime edifice, and a history replete with interest and full of the wisdom and glory of God.

The second point assailed by the objector is the power possessed by these evil spirits to influence, in any manner, the souls of men. But this, too, is the objection of ignorance. Who knows enough on this subject to warrant such an assumption? All the analogous facts are directly opposed to it. Whoever believes in the immortality of the soul and the existence of pure spirits in another world, must believe that they hold intercourse, and, in some way unknown to us, exert over each other a reciprocal influence. Even here there are facts which indicate a peculiar power of spiritual influence possessed by some and not by others. There are those who are endowed with special power to affect others, and there are those who seem to be possessed of peculiar susceptibilities of being affected. From some persons there goes forth a singular spiritual effluence that, all unconsciously to themselves, prepares others to be influenced by their words and acts. This influence may repel or attract according to the latent sympathies of the persons brought in connection. In some families a single person is a constant element of distrust, of disorder, of pain. In the same family another becomes an element of harmony and peace. Some persons have a native fascination about them, which, according to their character, is a power

for good or evil. Goethe, in his *Faust*, represents Margaret as unable to pray in the presence of Mephistopheles. The doctrine of sympathies and antipathies, which our modern spiritualists make so much of, exalting it into a divine law of life, is nothing but this power of spiritual influence possessed by one in a higher degree than another. It is not the mere words that are spoken, nor the thoughts conveyed by these words, that can account for the effects produced. It is something above and beyond these sensible things, proceeding from the spirit of the man himself, that makes his words more effective than when uttered by another. The unconscious influence of men is a mighty element of social elevation or depression. In one presence you feel depressed, powerless, all the evil emotions seem to be alive and rampant; in another you are exalted, strengthened, the good purposes stand on their feet, you are bold as a lion in the way of truth. Now I might extend this discussion indefinitely. I could cite instances of leaders in church and state, of the great fanatics and impostors who have possessed this power, and have exerted it for good or evil, so as to astonish the world. This, however, is the use I make of these known and admitted facts. The whole subject of spiritual influence is as yet only partially known to us; but enough is known to make us modest and cautious in our statements concerning it. In the face of such facts, it is preposterous for any man to affirm that it is either unreasonable or impossible for these fallen angels to influence us. Ignorance of the law is no argument against the fact, where that fact is asserted by competent authority and the attending consequences fully justify it.

Now, having looked at this subject a little from a position outside the Bible, let us consider the manner in which it is there discussed and represented. And here there are two facts which at once meet us. The first is that in the Old Testament the subject of evil spirits is not brought forward and made prominent. It is kept mostly out of sight, only occasionally alluded to, and then in general terms. The second fact is that in the New Testament it stands forth in wonderful prominence; Satan and his associates assume at once a position of power, and play a most important part in the exciting drama of the Savior's life. This is most extraordinary. On the ordinary principles of historical development it is wholly unaccountable. On the principles which Parker and Newman, and their teacher, Hegel, announced, it is impossible; for they contend that in the early ages men were savages, and then they indulged in all sorts of superstitious worship; gradually they worked themselves out of this by a natural law, and then, as truth revealed itself to them, these superstitions vanish. But here is a nation among which for ages this worst form of superstition, according to these writers, was almost unknown, kept down, and rarely alluded to by their religious teachers. But when they had become wonderfully advanced in refinement and knowledge—in an age when Grecian and Roman civilization, carrying with it the finest science and literature of all time, had spread over the world—then all at once this superstitious belief in evil spirits assumed prodigious proportions; and even Jesus Christ, admitted to be the greatest teacher the world ever saw, gave it his express sanction. Now, I affirm that this fact of history

condemns the theories of these men as utterly false. They are just as untrue as the old Ptolemaic system of astronomy has been shown to be by modern science.

How, then, it is asked, do you account for it? I answer, on the clearest principles contained in this revelation itself. The grand object designed in setting apart the Jewish nation was to prepare the way for the coming of Messiah. To effect this, true religion, the true knowledge and worship of God, must be preserved among them. Their chief danger was on the side of idolatry. They were surrounded by idolatrous nations—nations who worshiped all sorts of gods, and the devil among them; worshiped in great splendor, surrounding their rites with all the fascinations of revelry and pomp and everything that could appeal to the lusts of men. The whole Mosaic system is arraigned in direct antagonism to this very tendency. And, on this very principle, the doctrine of the fallen angels is kept in the background, lest it should furnish a point of attraction and a motive to idolatry. The form which Satan was allowed to assume in the temptation of our first parents is cursed and made loathsome; and had this not been done, the worship of the devil under this form would have been irresistible. You see this tendency illustrated in another case. The brazen serpent which Moses reared in the wilderness, to which the bitten Israelites might look, became in the time of Hezekiah an object of worship, and was on that account destroyed. Thus God guarded his chosen people on every side, and even held back the fuller knowledge of the fallen angels until he should come who was to destroy the works

of the devil. Then there was an expansion both of the power and manifestation of this great adversary. Then Jesus met and vanquished him for all who trust in him. The fact that Jesus was to triumph over all the powers of darkness, that he was to lead captivity captive, that he was to bruise the serpent's head, that he was to exalt humanity over the power that had been accessory to its degradation, gives us the clue to the divine permission, in consequence of which these evil spirits concentrated their malign influence upon the bodies and the souls of hundreds and thousands in that land and at that time. The explanation of the demoniacal influence under which so many then suffered is found in the fact that the true Messiahship of Christ must be manifest by the power which he exercised over these malignant enemies of man. This subject, however, will come under distinct review when we reach that period in this life of Jesus where he met and cast out these fallen spirits.

Now I turn to two other points with which we are more immediately concerned in this stage of his life. First, I wish here to meet the assumption that Jesus and his apostles, in speaking of these evil spirits, only accommodated themselves to the prevailing false notions of the time. This is a most extraordinary assumption. Jesus Christ is the light of the world, and he sanctions a falsehood—nay, presents it in so many ways, and that too without the least necessity, as if it were true—that the great mass of his followers have ever since believed it. Jesus Christ opposed the popular notions of Pharisees and Sadducees; he broke down ruthlessly and forever all their systems of faith; he spared neither great nor small; he spake the truth

which emancipates the world from the slavery of error and sin ; he flashed the light in upon the secret hearts of men ; he established the principles which exalt humanity ; he unveiled the powers of life and death, ever antagonistic, that are working among men ; he set forth the truth all men are to receive, he blasted the error all men are to reject. He moved resolutely forward amidst all the powers of hell in his work of mercy, until he was nailed to the cross. The word he spake, the work he did, shattered the temples of idolatry, scattered the superstition that darkened over the people, brought millions out of darkness into light, and opened the pathway for humanity to enter the gates of heaven. Now point me, if you can, to an instance in which Jesus sanctioned by word or act a superstition or a falsity ; show me an element in all his teachings that is not to-day one of the pure and fit stones in the temple of Christianity. The supposition that he allowed himself to speak, and his disciples to write, that which he knew to be a mere superstition, is monstrous. It belies his whole character ; it vitiates his life. Better say he was mistaken ; better assume that you are his superior in knowledge ; better, in your self-conceit, claim to know more than he did about the powers of the spiritual world ; for, in so doing, while you sacrifice his divine intelligence, you at least save his honesty and sincerity. We stand on higher ground ; we take him to be our divine teacher respecting this unseen world ; we follow him with perfect confidence into the realm of the unseen and spiritual ; we hail the light he flashes on the dark profound of this untraversed and unfathomed ocean ; we accept him as the expounder of mysteries

concealed since the foundation of the world; we see in his doctrine of the fallen angels the key to the sad history of our race, and in his victory over these fallen spirits the pledge and assurance of our victory over Satan, sin, and death.

I shall reserve a full discussion of the power of the Devil until we take up the subject of the demoniacs; only remarking here, that he possessed the power of temptation; that he could exert a seductive influence; that he could so address the natural desires of men, and so disguise the evil, as to appeal powerfully to the soul in favor of self-indulgence. He could force no man's will; but he had access to all the motives which craft and cunning and devilish malice could suggest, to carry his points. Nor will I speculate on the question whether he revealed his personality to Christ in visible form, or whether he presented himself to the Savior in that spiritual presence to which the soul of Jesus would be acutely sensitive. For the record informs us of none of these things; it decides nothing in respect to these points; it only gives us the fact of his presence with Jesus, and his efforts to tempt him into sin.

This brings us, however, to a point of fundamental importance. The temptation of Jesus must come from an external agency. We, in our corruption, experience the spontaneous rise of evil passions. The underlying strength of our selfishness breaks forth of itself in exaggerated desires which we have not the will to control. The heart, already evil, is disposed to yield to temptation when it comes, and often to create it. But in Christ there was ever the calm resting of his soul on God; the most complete sub-

jection of his will to that of the Father. In him there was no spontaneous combustion of desire, no tumults or fierce tempests of passion. Dwelling ever in the bosom of God, this human soul, in harmony with itself, holding all its powers under strict control, indulged not of itself the conceptions or the desires of evil. The power that could tempt must be wholly from without. His temptation was no self-created imagination, no self-produced visions of personal ambition or selfish gratification. It must be an external agent that must make the appeal and present the motives to his sensitive spirit. And who so fit an agent, or so mighty to assail his virtue, as the prince-leader of the fallen angels? Who like him in craft, in cunning, in the power of approaching and influencing the soul? Who like him, of all created beings, had so thoroughly sounded the depths of and compassed the avenues to the heart of man? Who like him knew so well how to take advantage of the most favorable conditions of both body and spirit? Who so successful as him who had seduced our first parents—who through four thousand years had plied his arts and directed his emissaries in the work of debauching humanity and building up his kingdoms on the ruins of the fall? The prince of darkness suffers no subordinate agent to undertake this work. Face to face he meets the Son of God. Summoning all his art and power of influence over spirit, he enters upon the conflict. Jesus feels the presence; knows it to be the presence of a superior intelligence. Cunningly, with consummate yet devilish wisdom, the tempter conducts his approaches, but conceals his end. At every step the appeal is met. The shadow of a dark thought is not

suffered to rest in the Savior's heart. Quick as the thunder responds to the lightning's flash, he resists, he foils, he triumphs over the tempter. Then Satan, baffled, defeated in his damned work, slinks away; knowing now that he is to be dethroned and cursed forever.

In this victory of Christ is contained the assurance of our victory. The development of our humanity advances through all kinds of trials, of temptations, of scenes joyful and sorrowful. This is a divine ordinance which all the art and will of man can not reverse. Character is to be formed, results as lasting as eternity are to be reached along this path. No man can escape from this discipline of temptation and trial. No one can nullify an ordinance established by God himself. Whether he wishes it or no, pass through it he must. Jesus in his purity passed through it without the shadow of a stain. We, in our weakness and corruption, need divine strength to make it a discipline of life, a means of developing our characters in love and faith, in goodness, purity, and truth. Christ is our strength. Grasping his hand, looking to him in prayer, trusting to him as a present Redeemer, temptation and the tempter are already vanquished. Oh! never does a soul in conscious weakness, in child-like confidence, seek to hide under the shadow of his wing, commit itself fully to his protection, but power from on high comes down into it; swift-winged ministers of love from his side descend to guard us, and in the agony of our deepest sorrow save us from murmuring and whisper words of consolation and hope. Oh! never does a young soul choose Christ for his leader, and resolve to obey his sacred law and so stand up

amidst the forces of evil that assail him, confident in his protection, but he is lifted on eagle wings above the pollutions of earth, and this wicked one touches him not, and his pestiferous breath enters not within the charmed circle within which Jesus is enthroned. But let him seek to stand in his own strength; let him think that Christ and his victory has no vital relation to his deliverance; let him summon only his own manhood, already tending to sin, to the work, and the wily adversary is sure of his victim; he knows that none but Christ can vanquish him, and this poor soul shall yet become his subject, his slave forever.

## XI.

## THE TEMPTATION (NO. 4).

*“ And in those days he did eat nothing: and when they were ended, he afterward hungered. And the devil said unto him, ‘ If thou be the Son of God, command this stone that it be made bread.’ And Jesus answered him, saying, It is written, ‘ That man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.’ ”—Luke iv: 2, 3, 4.*

WE come now to the struggle. The decisive hour has come, which gave to this sojourn in the wilderness a vital interest for humanity. It is to be demonstrated that this sinless soul will maintain its stainless integrity amidst the most subtle forces of evil. For it is one thing to be holy in one class of circumstances, and quite another to continue holy in all circumstances. Satan was sinless for a time; but he fell. Adam walked for a time in obedience, but then he yielded to temptation. And now, at the opening of his public ministry, the circumstances in which Jesus had lived in perfect communion with God were entirely changed. The hour of a special trial had come. On the results of this trial hung suspended the redemption of the world. Jesus, victorious, now wins the earnest of a complete and final victory. Darker hours of suffering he may see; but never more a power of temptation more subtle and effective than this.

Let us look *first* at his situation. What was his ex-

perience during the forty days preceding is not on record. But there is nothing in this record to forbid the supposition that they were of the holiest and most blissful character. It is natural to suppose that during this time he dwelt in the very bosom of the Father, and was conscious of the fullness of God. This revelation of the divine nature to his consciousness exalted and intensified all his powers; this made him insensible to loneliness and hunger; this opened to him the height and depth, the length and breadth of the wonderful work he was to perform for humanity.

But now these hours are passed. There is a withdrawal of this supernal brightness. It is not darkness that succeeds; it is the pale moon-light after the sun has gone. He is amidst the dim light and mocking shadows in which man lives. For now, as man, he is to encounter temptation; in his naked humanity he must meet the tempter. To him, conscious of the fullness of God, temptation is impossible; but to him, in conscious dependence and weakness as human, it is possible; and only thus can it be a real trial, and the result a real victory. He feels now his loneliness; he realizes his manhood; his state as a creature. How often, when dear friends leave us, in whose presence we have felt strong and bright as angels, is there, in spite of the blessed memories of that intercourse, a vacancy of the heart, a sense of loneliness, of weakness, of almost dread to meet the inevitable trials before us and drink the cup of bitterness that is presented to our lips. Jesus is constituted like us; Jesus, in his humanity, experiences these same exaltations and depressions, these reactions after the withdrawal of the divine manifestations and blissful consciousness of

union with the divine in his human nature; with this difference, that in him there is no stain of corruption, and these inward trials are taken upon him in order that he may be for us a sympathizing High Priest and Savior. This is the key that unlocks the mystery of all the sorrow of his holy soul. And, judging of him from this stand-point, and in harmony with all the analogies of his life, it is doing no violence to the scene before us, it is but carrying out the most natural train of thought suggested by it, to suppose that after the ecstatic consciousness of the divine fullness came the sense of loneliness, of dependence, of weakness, a vision of the suffering he is to endure, and the fearful trial through which his soul must pass in effecting our redemption. In his simple, naked humanity he meets the tempter.

Then, with this withdrawal of the divine consciousness, another most significant fact meets us. For forty days he has eaten nothing; sustained by this divine power within him, he cares not for food. But now that state of exaltation and spiritual affluence is past. The body, long deprived of its accustomed nourishment, asserts its claims. They are not to be trifled with. As a stream dammed up and long gathering head, when it breaks away, how impetuously it rushes—with what violence it moves onward! So these appetites of the body, long held back, break forth with fearful power. They cry, they clamor for indulgence. There is a deep meaning in those words: "He was an hungered." Hunger drives men mad! Hunger has slain its dearest friend, to feed upon his body! Hunger has stifled natural affection, and made the mother forget her offspring, and prey upon her

babe! Who that has known its extremity, or who that has seen it, as it met their eyes when our poor, noble boys were landed at Annapolis from the prisons of Andersonville and Salisbury, looking out of their hollow eyes and emaciated forms, will fail to have impressed upon him a vivid, an eternal sense of its appalling, fearful significance? But Jesus was human like these men. Jesus felt these natural desires crying for bread; his body, in its weakness, craved the same sustenance, clamored for it, imperiously demanded it.

Then the tempter came. He chose the hour of loneliness, of weakness, of hunger, for his assault. Doubtless he had waited and watched for his opportunity all through this forty days' sojourn in the wilderness; but while the divine presence filled and shone out of the soul of Jesus, he dared not approach him. Now, however, he is quick to perceive that *his* time has come. Now, while the soul embraces itself after these days of intense excitement, and the body is weak through fasting, and the gates through which temptation may enter the citadel are open, the crafty adversary seizes the opportunity, and, like a skillful general, at once approaches to the assault. Whether he assumed a visible form, or made himself known only in his spiritual personality, to the soul of Jesus, sensitive to and quick to feel such influences, is not of the smallest consequence. The great deceiver comes not in his true character, as the arch-adversary; he blows no trumpet; he announces not his evil purpose. It is as an angel of light; as one invested by God with power and authority; as a minister of kindness, in sympathy with the weak and depressed condition of Jesus.

This is ever the master stroke of his policy; as a friend pleading for liberty; for safe and natural indulgence; for the seeming interests of body and soul. So came he to our first parents. The tree is fair; the fruit is good to eat; ye shall be as God himself. So came he to Jesus, as an angel of strength and blessing.

Let us attend now more particularly to the assault.

Here you will notice two points: First, the basis of the temptation, the point of departure, is the appetite for food. The exciting cause, of which the tempter avails himself, is hunger. This desire is natural; it is part of the original and innocent constitution of the body. These desires arise in the healthy operation of our physical system. They are given to be gratified. The proper indulgence of them is a source of daily pleasure. God's goodness is seen in them. He never meant that man should eat his food with a wry face, as if it were medicine; but with a glad and thankful heart, as an evidence of the divine wisdom and goodness. Jesus had a body just like ours, and appetites like ours. He could feel the pangs of hunger, and he could enjoy the pleasure which a healthy appetite properly gratified gives to a healthy body. In all this he was as sinless as the angels themselves. Here, then, on the gratification of this natural and innocent appetite, asking for food, Satan plants himself. Why should not the Savior take measures at once to appease his hunger?

And this brings us to the second point—the real point of the temptation. For it is not the hunger or the appeasing of it that is in itself sinful or holy. The virtue or the evil is in the means, the time, the way,

the spirit in which it is sought to gratify the appetite. The point of the temptation is in the way in which Satan attempts to induce Jesus to satisfy his hunger: "If thou be the Son of God, command that this stone be made bread." Satan's knowledge is more or less limited; it is not broad and comprehensive; it is artful and cunning; but he would be ignorant indeed if he had not made himself familiar with the extraordinary history of Jesus. His devilish instincts taught him that here was a holy soul over which as yet he had no power. The scene at the baptism and the forty days in the wilderness had informed him of Christ's remarkable character as the Son of God. His natural forecast would apprise him that in some way this being might wrest from him his kingdom and thrust him down to the lowest hell. And so, in his efforts to win him over to his side, he uses the very title given Christ by the Holy Ghost at the baptism, "If thou be the Son of God." Now, you may take this in one of two ways—either, it may be an assertion. Since thou art, or assuming thou art the Son of God, and then it is a flattering recognition of the true character of Christ; or, *If* thou art the Son of God, if thou claim to be the Son of God, and then it is a sort of half challenge to him to prove himself such. I prefer, in view of the special character of this temptation, to take it in the first sense; the other harmonizes least, as we shall hereafter see, with the second temptation. Taking it, then, in that sense, it may be paraphrased thus: Since thou art the Son of God, all power is given to thee. Why, then, should you suffer the pangs of hunger? You have but to speak and this stone will become bread. It is right for you to indulge your

appetite; there is no sin in eating. Food is necessary to sustain the body. Why should you, the Son of God, suffer thus, when you are abundantly able to avoid it? Only command, and this desert will be full of bread.

Now, all this seems exceedingly plausible. What harm can result from such an indulgence here in the wilderness? Why may not Jesus relieve himself from suffering by the immediate exercise of that power which is vested in him? What sin can there be in creating and eating the food needful for the sustenance of his body? But if we look at this point more carefully, we shall see that this plausibility is all superficial, that it is nothing but a deception, that it involves enormous error and guilt, that underneath this appeal of Satan are fundamental principles of right action which he seeks to nullify and destroy. Power in human hands is always a dangerous possession. Power of wealth, power of official station, and that grander power of a great intellect, all exaggerate the liabilities to evil and enhance the seductive forces of the world. This possession lifts a man above the ordinary limitations which have fenced him round against the assault of self-indulgence. With the ability to indulge them freely, the inferior propensities are quickened into new life, the passions clamor for larger scope and field, the power of self-gratification infuses itself into the very excitements which clamor for it. Or if power does not work in this direction, it reacts on the soul itself; it stimulates the tendency to independence and self-exaltation; it makes man his own God; it impels him to exalt his authority, to magnify

his importance, to depress and scorn or envy others, to perpetuate and increase itself, and make himself the center of all his aims and efforts.

Hence it is that power is full of danger. Hence virtue is so rare a thing in a monarch, true patriotism in an official, sterling piety in connection with great possessions or the consciousness of high intellectual power. Hence, too, the checks and limitations which men in power need to curb their ambition, and which we all need to remind us that we are not gods but creatures, and that responsibility keeps pace with power and stands sentinel over it, and demands of it a just use, and will exact from it a final and strict account. The assault of Satan, therefore, is upon a vital point. He struck at the very heart of religion; for power is connected in some form with all these temptations, and power in some form is associated with all the indulgences of sin in this world. Men are not ambitious to build railroads to the moon; a hind will not lust after a queen; an idiot will not seek to wield the scepter of Milton; no man thirsts for the meter of Homer's gods. It is the power of self-indulgence that creates the temptation or enhances vastly its force. Jesus was weak in body; Jesus was suffering the pains of hunger; Jesus has all power committed to him, and can command the very stones to minister to his wants. Here are all the elements of a real and tremendous temptation—*i. e.*, the natural appetite, the power to gratify it, and a seeming friend urging him to use his power for this purpose. Such is the *assault*.

3. Now let us consider the *resistance*. Bear in mind what I have already stated, that Jesus is here left to

the naked working of his own pure humanity; that the knowledge of the tempter's true character is not given, and that, on the contrary, Satan comes to him as an exalted friend in sympathy with his trials and seeking to minister to his wants. Then consider these points in the resistance to the temptation. (1.) It is instantaneous. There is no hesitation, no parleying. He at once discerns the evil principle involved; instantly he repels; he flashes upon it his condemnation. Hunger he may, but sin never! Suffer he may, but the shadow of guilt must not rest on him for an instant. (2.) But he not only repels the temptation in his heart; he expresses the ground of his rejection in words. It is written—written in that Old Testament some men seek to put away as a thing of the past—divinely written by God's inspiration in Deuteronomy viii, 3: "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God." Man has a higher life than this of the body. It is not in the indulgence of his appetites as he may choose consists his true life. The soul is his nobler part, his chief possession, his characteristic humanity. This lives only in harmony with God's word, expressing the divine will; this lives only as it recognizes and obeys the divine authority. To disobey is to die; sin is self-destruction. To love, to reverence, to serve the heavenly Father; to listen to His voice, to yield itself wholly to His control, to follow His word in suffering as well as in joy, in hunger and satiety, this is man's true life, this is eternal life! "You say I am the Son of God, and that power is given me to create sustenance for my body out of these stones. As Son of God I come to redeem and save men from sin and death. As son of man I come

to suffer and be tried in their stead. The power given to me as Son of God I am to use only in the advancement of the kingdom of God. It was not to relieve my bodily wants, it was not to be appropriated to my personal ease and aggrandizement, that I receive it. It was to vindicate my mission as the Savior of men, to establish the authority I represent, to prepare the way for and authenticate the words I utter, that it is given me to work the works of God. This body is to suffer; my life is to do the will of Him that sent me." This is the sublime answer Jesus gives to the tempter. His whole life, from this hour to that in which he cried, "It is finished," embodies, illustrates, echoes, sounds it forth and down the generations of men. We hear it here to-night, as full and clear and convincing and vital as when uttered in that wilderness two thousand years ago. It is the fundamental principle of religion for man. It is the assertion (1) of the dignity, the value of the soul, its superiority to the body, and to the accidents of time and sense. It has its own life, even though the body suffer and die. It is the assertion (2) of its direct responsibility to God. It holds to him the relation of subject. It can never lay aside this responsibility for its acts. It is bound to this by a chain stronger than fate. It is not made independent. Every attempt to put self on the throne is suicidal. God is the only sovereign. Resist that truth; fight against it; summon all your powers against it; you have not nullified it, you have not weakened it, your chain is unbroken; infinite power holds you in its grasp; infinite authority asserts its claims to your obedience. This responsibility is on you because you are not mere body, but

soul ; not a brute, but a man ; not a god, but a poor finite creature, living and moving in God alone. (3) It asserts that God's word, received, loved, obeyed, is the soul's true life. It is not bread and meat and drink ; it is not self-indulgence of those bodily appetites which the brutes share in common with you, that makes your real life. It is love, it is faith, it is obedience, it is communion with God ; this is the life the soul is to enjoy ; this is the life that triumphs over temptation, that sings in the hour of pain, that feels angelic joy and hears angelic symphonies in the hour of death. Thus Jesus puts aside the temptation to sensual indulgence. Food was desirable, but truth and obedience were infinitely more desirable. Power was in his hands, but it was not given for personal indulgence. This high trust, the most dangerous in the world, the most liable to be abused, he held sacred for its high objects. Never through all his life, amidst his darkest hours, did he work a miracle to relieve himself from one pain or gratify one earthly passion. He fed thousands, but never a loaf created he for himself. He saved thousands, but never a word spake he and never an exertion of divine power to save himself did he put forth. Led into this wilderness for a great purpose, he calmly waits God's time for its accomplishment. He who fed Israel in the desert will, in due time, feed him. Amidst depression and weakness and hunger, assailed by the prince of darkness himself, he stands upon the mount of faith, serene, patient, obedient. Where, in all history, is there another like him ; such power, and yet such self-control ; such temptation, and yet such decisive resistance ; such depression from outward circumstances, and yet such serene, unclouded

faith? Behold, O man, in Christ the exemplar for you! Behold in him the victor for you!

This whole scene is full of interest for all men. This temptation is no idle and fruitless imagination; it is not a theoretic abstraction—something in the clouds, far above the practical lives of men. It has a direct and vital connection with one of the most pregnant sources of demoralization and sin in society. It is a temptation which every one has to encounter; which meets us at the threshold of our active life, and by its fascinations has seduced and ruined millions. The sensuous appetites are absolutely essential to our existence in these bodies and the perpetuation of the race. God has given them their office, and though it is not the highest nor the most honorable, yet it is necessary to the higher operations of humanity, and is neither degrading nor sinful. Their sphere is narrow, accessory, temporary, in comparison with that of those desires which spring more directly from the intellect and the heart; but the pleasure attending indulgence, while it is short, is often more intense. Kept in their true sphere, restrained within the limits God himself, by a law both natural and moral, has fixed, they subserve man's elevation and happiness. Breaking over those limits, loosened from the control of conscience, allowed to become supreme, they brutify, debauch, dishonor, and ruin the whole man. No matter how grand and noble may be the mental capacities, no matter how near an angel the soul may be in its moral constitution and capabilities, subjection to these sensual appetites defiles, degrades, and wrecks in utter ruin all that is noble in intellect, all that is angelic in the spiritual constitution. When the tempter says:

“ You have the power ; use it as you list for the gratification of these sensuous appetites,” if the man yields, he has put on Satan’s livery, and with it his chain, and must march with him to perdition.

There are three lines of sensual indulgence along which the tempter plies his arts of seduction. The first, and perhaps the least hurtful, is the desire for food ; this he exaggerates, makes the victim a gourmand, who counts the pleasures of the table the chief joy of life. The second is the desire for physical excitement, begetting an unnatural appetite for strong drink. The third is sexual desire.

Now the point where temptation comes in with enhanced power, where the tempter finds the gates open for his entrance, is usually where the full power of self-indulgence is obtained. If thou be the Son of God, command this stone to be made bread. Give a man power, opportunity, seeresy ; let nothing stand between him and indulgence but the invisible law of God ; let him not stand in fear of the loss of reputation or of health ; take all social restraints away ; and then see, unless he is fixed by long habit or is under the control of divine principle, the tremendous power of this temptation. It is fortunate for men to be early trained where their very circumstances limit these sensuous indulgences, or where the high moral standard of society and social life exert a perpetually restraining influence to keep the strong passions of youth from overleaping their fit bounds. But when this is not so, there profligacy becomes the rule, and morality the exception ; vice ascends the throne, and virtue retires to lowly places.

See how a youth entering the city, before his habits

and principles are formed and settled on a right basis, is exposed to almost irresistible temptation. Here in this city of Utica his love of excitement finds unhealthy stimulants on every side. He is free to enjoy, to indulge; no father's eye is upon him; no sweet, pure social circle is around him; a city government, more intent on getting a few dollars into its treasury than in guarding its young citizens from the contamination of vicious public exhibitions, worthy of Sodom; vile theatrical displays of half-nude women; saloons for play and drink; the open doors of her whose guests are in the depths of hell; companions already contaminated; these facilitate his descent while they solicit it; his own heart hungering for something, he knows not what; his passions vivid, strong, impetuous; power to indulge them in his hands—all help on the tempter's work. What wonder so many fall! More wonderful that any stand! Power to indulge is, I repeat it, the very point of temptation. If the telegraph could sound the secret messages it flashes to New York, when some men of fair outside among us are going there on business, it would show preparations for self-indulgence in the secrecy of the great city, which circumstances, not moral principle, put out of their reach here. And so shading upward through society from these darker scenes to the social gatherings where the delicate viands and the wine-cup constitute a greater attraction than the interchange of thought and friendly conversation, you find temptation to sensual indulgence with all its fascinations, and the appetites that should be humble servitors placed in the seat of honor. And so true manhood and womanhood are degraded, and all the refinements of dress and

manners can not veil the coarse and sensual devil they worship.

This temptation in the wilderness is repeated every day and hour the world over. Every man, every woman, every child in this house has had to meet it, has yet to meet it in some form. How shall we resist it; how rise above it? Just as Jesus met it. Parley not; hesitate not; look not on the wine when it moveth itself aright; treat your body as a servant and not as your master. Rising up to the heights where Jesus would lead you, think of the value and true life of your soul—its eternity to be made holy and happy by your course in time. Take God's word as your rule, your guide, your armory of defense; strike at temptation with the sword of the spirit. The world helps you not. David's pebble slung in faith is mightier than Goliath's sword. Give your heart to God. Take Christ himself, who fought through this temptation for you—take him to be your strength and your helper. Here alone, as a true, humble, penitent, believing Christian, are you safe. Oh! what a blessing it is to become a child of God young; to learn to live as man should live while you are yet in youth. What temptations you avoid; what power to resist temptation you obtain! For God and Christ, and Christians and angels are on your side against Satan and his worldly allies.

See that man who, instead of serving Christ while young, yielded to temptation, debauched his soul years ago; now he strives to rise above it in his own strength; his imagination is defiled, his will is weak, the fire of passion smolders in his soul. Oh! what a judgment day is before him!

See that man, still young ! A few years ago he was bright and prosperous ; friends praised him ; he was on the high road of advancement towards honor and fame ; trusted and loved. Now he is a slave ; he yielded to the tempter, and he wears his livery ! See how he struggles, resolves, and re-resolves. In vain ! in vain ! the chain eats into his soul. He is despised, distrusted ; friends leave him ; Death, on his pale horse, in all his terrors, is moving toward him. Oh ! can nothing save him ? Yes ! one, and one only, can save ; for him Christ died ; for him Jesus conquered the tempter. Oh ! if he will but come, a poor, lost sinner, and lay hold of Christ ; if he will but say to him, in ever so feeble accents, Lord, save, or I perish ! there is help, there is mercy even for him.

## XII.

ON THE TEMPTATION (NO. 5.)—THE SECOND TEMPTATION.

“ *Then the devil taketh him up into the holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple, and saith unto him, ‘If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest, at any time, thou dash thy foot against a stone.’ Jesus saith unto him, ‘It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.’*”—Matt. iv, 5-7.

THE order in which the temptations are recorded is different in Luke. He places this temptation last. The natural explanation is that Matthew follows the order of time, Luke that of place. Luke puts the temptations that occurred in the wilderness together, and then gives the one that took place at Jerusalem. Matthew’s is clearly the order of time, and harmonizes better with the final statement, that the angels came and ministered to him. We shall find all through the life of Christ these diversities, showing the different principles on which the narratives are constructed. Chronological accuracy is rarely sought for—the great object being to present the life of Jesus in his teachings and miracles, rather than to trace out his progress from day to day. This, indeed, would not have been possible without incumbering the narrative with a vast amount of local and statistical information of no

special importance. The gospels in this case would have assumed the form of ponderous volumes. Hence each writer fixed upon those parts and events in the life of our Lord which seemed to him best, and grouped them together according to a plan of his own. The result is we have four narratives, concise and yet full, differing from each other in form and manner and material, furnishing to the world the most complete picture of the words and acts of Jesus, and evincing everywhere the independence, the sincerity, and the faithfulness of the writers. There is no life of any of the great men of antiquity that possesses a title of the evidence of its historical reality that attaches to this. And instead of being troubled at the diversities which exist in these narratives, we should thank God for the wisdom that wrought them into one harmonious whole.

In this second temptation the scene is apparently laid in Jerusalem. Some commentators suppose it occurred in the wilderness, and that it was wholly spiritual; or, in other words, imaginary. Satan by his peculiar power raised these ideas in the mind of Jesus, so that he seemed to himself to stand on the temple. In opposition to this theory, it seems clear to me that we must take the description literally. Christ actually went to Jerusalem, and then the temptation occurred just as it is described. In support of this opinion, the following reasons are conclusive: 1. It is obvious from the language of both Matthew and Luke that they believed Jesus went to Jerusalem. They state the occurrence positively, in language adapted to convey this idea. They give no hint of any kind on which to base an opposite opinion.

They are our sole authorities. Jesus, in his conversations with his disciples on this subject, must have authorized them to make such a statement, with the design of having it understood literally. In every case where a parabolic or imaginary scene is given in order to illustrate a spiritual truth, there is always something in the representation to indicate the fact. Here there is nothing of the kind. No one, in reading it, unless he had some special theory to support, would ever suspect that it was not a literal statement of a simple historical fact. The language employed by both writers is very clear. Matthew says the devil took Jesus, associated him with him as a companion, like two persons traveling together. For this is the meaning of the Greek word *παραλαμβάνει*. Luke says he led or conducted him to the holy city—*ἡγαγεν*. Both describe a literal fact in unequivocal terms. Jesus came into the wilderness to be tempted, and after the forty days he was designedly left to the influences of this prince of deceivers. Under his influence he went to Jerusalem. On the plain and simple statement of these sacred writers it is safe to stand. According to the only authority we have in the case, Jesus actually went to Jerusalem and was there tempted.

But, 2. The entire scene when taken literally is in harmony with itself and with all the known facts in the case. The wilderness, where Christ spent his forty days, pushes up to within a few miles of Jerusalem. No sooner are you over Olivet, and past Bethany, than you plunge right into it. It was only a short walk from this point to the city. There is no antecedent improbability, therefore, from the distance, against this opinion, but everything in favor of it. Then the position

in which Christ is said to have been placed corresponds exactly with the known facts. He is said to have stood on a pinnacle of the temple. The term, *ἱερόν*, is temple is general, and includes not only the central building, which was called *Ναός*, or temple proper, but the courts and surrounding structures. The central building was covered with spikes to prevent the birds from resting upon it. No man could stand there. But around this there were courts or cloisters resting on pillars, some of them quite lofty, rising from thirty to fifty feet, and two hundred feet above the temple area. And as they were built against the outer wall there was in some cases a sheer descent of more than one hundred feet. They were built with flat roofs and with towers in the corners and other points. It seems probable from their construction that the people ascended to the roofs and walked upon them. The view was magnificent, and in the cool of the day the position most delightful. Now the Greek term, translated pinnacle, means literally a wing, or a little wing. For these cloisters were folded round the main temple like the wings of a bird. We use the same term in the same way in modern architecture. We speak of the wing of a building. Now it is clear that Satan could easily have conducted Jesus on to one of these wings, and then to one of the towers or points, or terminations, like that near the gate Beautiful on the south side of the temple area. Standing here, on what seems to have been a peculiar eminence, he would have below him on one side the temple area crowded with worshipers, and on the other the street leading up to the gate thronged with people ascending and descending. If from such a point he threw himself into the court

below, the height was great enough, unless supernaturally sustained, to have killed him. If he fell outside the wall, death was naturally inevitable. Here, then, you have all the elements of this second temptation, and they harmonize perfectly with the descriptions given by the sacred writers. (See Porter's *Giant Cities of Bashan*.)

In addition to these reasons for accepting the statement in the text as a literal account of the fact, I mention still another. This view *enhances the reality and the force of the temptation*. It gives it its true reality, life and power. Nothing is vague, cloudy, abstruse; we see at once how the time, the place, the circumstances, all contribute to its power. Compare it with some other views. Take the account as given by Dr. Furness. Christ is wandering in the desert—"Absorbed in thought, heedless of his steps, his foot strikes against a stone and he stumbles. Perhaps he is in danger of a serious fall. Instantly there occurs to him a passage of scripture, 'He will give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone,' and then it occurs to him that since he has angels attending him at every step saving him from the slightest hurt, why may not he go to the city, the great city of Jerusalem, and ascend one of the pinnacles of the temple and cast himself off, and display to the astonished crowd below his power of securing his own safety by means of these invisible attendants." Here he first takes out of the narrative what the sacred writers put there, Satanic agency. Here he imagines that Christ struck his foot against a stone and was in danger of a fall; then he imagines that Christ recollected a par-

ticular text of scripture; then he imagines that Christ imagined that he might go to Jerusalem and fling himself from a pinnacle of the temple. And this is a temptation which it cost Jesus a struggle to overcome! What a delightful and effective art is this refined science of criticism! It can take out of a narrative the main facts in it; then it can put in it entirely new facts at its pleasure, and on these assumed facts erect a building to suit its own fancy. We have heard of a man who contended, after he had put a new blade into an old handle and then a new handle to the new blade, that it was the same identical old knife, although every part was new. We laugh at the man's stupid simplicity, and we might laugh at the equally stupid simplicity of these modern critics, were the subject not so serious, and did we not know that this falsification of history the most sacred, stupid and wicked as it is, destructive as its principles are of all his historic faith, is yet accepted by many who wish to bring down Christ to their level and reduce all religion to mere naturalism.

But leaving these bold deniers of the truth, let us turn to such men as Lange, Neander, and others, whose faith in the divine Christ and the inspiration of his word is undoubted. In their opinion, this second temptation occurred in the wilderness. Satan, by his peculiar power, placed Christ in spirit on the pinnacle of the temple, and tempted him to cast himself down. Now, without denying the power of Satan to do this thing, we affirm that such a temptation could not possibly have the same force and reality as it would were Christ actually standing on the wing of the temple. In the one case the senses would tend

constantly to correct and nullify the satanic influence ; in the other they would necessarily heighten it. His position in the wilderness, his sight, his hearing, are in one case all opposed to the influence exerted upon him and tend to counteract it ; in the other his position on the dizzy height, the sounds around him, the swarming multitudes, all give a special force and reality to the temptation. It is a remarkable fact, that in both the other temptations Satan starts from a material stand-point, and uses that to give effect to his own power. In the first it is the stone before Jesus ; in the third it is the view from a mountain. And it would be strange indeed if, with Jerusalem so near, he did not make the pinnacle of the temple the material stand-point to heighten the force of the second temptation. And thus, without attempting to develope this argument further, it seems clear to me, from the explicit statements of the sacred writers, from the harmony of all the supposed facts in the case, and from this, the greater effectiveness of the temptation, that Christ was actually led to Jerusalem, and there tempted.

Now, let us come directly to the temptation. Leaving the wilderness, Satan conducts Jesus through Bethany up to the summit of Olivet. Jerusalem, in all its pride and glory, is below him. Jerusalem, the city of the great king. Jerusalem, discrowned and subject to imperial Rome. Jerusalem, with all its sacred memories and thrilling associations, fills his eye and touches his heart. For he is its rightful king ; yet there he is to suffer as a malefactor. They descend to and cross the Kidron, enter the city, pass into the inclosure of the temple, ascend the south-eastern

cloister and the lofty tower or pinnacle or wing, at the point where the walls unite. Standing here, what a scene of varied splendor and busy life meets the eye! The city itself, with its palaces on Mount Zion, and its lofty habitations stretching to the west and north. Around and inclosing the whole are the mountains in their vernal beauty, like a glorious setting for this jewel of the world; below and opposite are the temple proper, in its gilded magnificence, and the cloisters in their pillared beauty; while on the east and south are the deep gorges of Kidron and Himmon. It is the hour of evening prayer. The area below, the bridge leading from Mount Zion, the street up which they pass through the Beautiful gate, are crowded with people thronging to and around the holy temple. The Pharisee is there, with his broad phylacteries, going over, in a loud voice, his endless repetitions of formal prayers; here and there a poor publican, with down-cast eyes, smites upon his breast and from his heart prays, "God be merciful to me, a sinner;" while others, with little of either the form or reality of devotion, are mingling in converse or trafficking with the sellers of things for sacrifice. Yet among all the multitude there is not one heart that does not anticipate the coming of Messiah, that has not been stirred by the annunciations of the Baptist, or that does not thrill with the hopes of his speedy coming to cast down the Roman from yonder tower of Antonio and make Jerusalem again the seat of the most glorious sovereignty in the world. Unknown, hardly noticed, on that lofty pinnacle, stands this very Messiah, looking with a serene eye upon this wonderful people.

And now there is a hush of the many-voiced multi-

tude ; out of the gates of the temple swells the solemn chant of the Levites ; clearer and louder it falls upon the ear ; one, and then another, take up the words of the triumphant 72d psalm, until, like the voice of many waters, like the majestic harmonies of Niagara, peal forth from every voice in unison the sublime strains of that grandest Messianic anthem : “ He shall have dominion from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth. All kings shall fall down before him ; all nations shall serve him ; his name shall endure forever ; his name shall be continued as long as the sun ; and men shall be blessed in him ; all nations shall call him blessed.” And as the psalm ends and the last notes die away in lingering echoes among the surrounding hills, every heart beats quickly, every eye is sparkling with the anticipated vision of the speedy coming of their long-expected triumphing Messiah.

Now, Satan, thy hour is come. For the Messiah himself stands there, thrilled by that sublime rehearsal of the prophet’s vision of himself and his kingdom, and longing to reveal himself to Israel. With consummate art he approaches him. He does not now appeal to his personal power ; he does not say : Cast thyself down, and by thy own divine strength hold thyself up from destruction. He tried this in the first temptation, and failed. But now he strikes another chord. He quotes scripture. He does it often in the persons of wicked men, when he thinks it will serve his purpose. The 91st psalm is one of the most beautiful and consolatory descriptions of the divine care and protection over all true believers. It breathes sublime confidence and peace into the pious heart

amidst the dangers and trials which are round it in the path of duty. He who is filled with its spirit is calm amidst excitement, bold amidst dangers, confident and strong amidst the earthquakes and hurricanes of nature, or the wild rage of the embattled passions and forces of wickedness in its assault upon the truth and kingdom of Jesus.

From this noble psalm, the devil quotes a promise of protection and support. If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down ; reveal thyself to this waiting multitude ; has not God said, He will give his angels charge concerning thee, and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone? Surely, if thou art his son, he will do for thee what he promises to do for every true believer. This is the fit hour and place to test his faithfulness. In so doing, you will make yourself known as Messiah to this people ; they will at once hail you as their king. Is not this an object worthy of the putting forth of the divine power, according to promise? Such is the temptation. The time, the place, the people — all enhance its force.

See, now, how the temptation is met. If Christ had been a mere enthusiast, if he had assumed a character which did not rightly belong to him, or attempted a work for which he was unfitted, he would, like multitudes of others, have seized upon the first plausible warrant of scripture that suited his personal aims, and the temptation would have been irresistible. Suiting the action to the apparent promise, he would have cast himself headlong to destruction. But Jesus was no enthusiast ; he was not blindly to be led to do an act which involved sin. He sees at once that the act

he was tempted to perform was based not upon a principle of legitimate faith, but of wicked presumption; that Satan has made a confessedly poetic description of the divine protection a literal basis for acts God never warranted. Oh! when the soul is in full sympathy with God's will, how almost instinctively it detects the seminal principles of error; how easily and grandly it rises above the misconceptions of passion, the misinterpretations of satanic and worldly influences, to a clearer vision of the simple truth, as it is in Jesus. The Savior's answer is given in the words of divine truth. He quotes from Deut. vi, 16, but changes *ye* into *thou*—*Thou* shalt not tempt the Lord thy God. He repels the artful temptation based upon a designed misapplication of one part of scripture, by another clear and authoritative enunciation of scripture. He does not oppose scripture to scripture, as if there could be a contradiction between them. He only interprets one scripture by another. He puts together the truths which stand related to each other and conjointly form the perfect whole. Truth is many-sided; especially these grand truths of God's Word. If you look only at one side, and neglect the others, you have but an imperfect conception of the whole. In a building of noble proportions, there are parts which, taken singly, seem awkward and practically false; but, when seen in position, they rise to the beautiful and true. Jesus says, at one time: Ye can not come to me. Taken by itself, men would say: Then we are bound in the chains of fate; and how can we believe? He says again: Ye will not come to me that ye might have life. Put the two together and you have the whole truth; one explains the other; one shows the true meaning of

the other. Three-fourths of all the theological controversies in the world have resulted from this narrow, one-sided method of interpretation. There is a beautiful harmony, a wonderful justness of proportion, in the Word of God. The Old Testament and the New illustrate each other. And the broad-minded, clear student of the Word soon learns to trace out truth in its relations, and then, with every step, it swells into harmony, and he hears the voices of prophets and apostles mingling in one glorious anthem of praise.

Jesus here flashes upon his tempter a fundamental truth, which is the *base* melody of that glorious 91st psalm. The inspired writer describes, in bold figures, and with that symbolic exaggeration which is one of the most impressive elements of true poetry and separates it widely from literal prose, the protection which God gives to the good man. But through it all there is presupposed the harmony of his life with the will of God. The devil, in his cunning, drops out of his quotation that sentence in the original which would have suggested this. For it is not, He shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee, as if it were absolute; but to keep thee in all thy ways—the ways in which as a man of God you ought to walk. Here is the mighty difference between presumption and a just confidence in the divine support. Presumption plans for itself without reference to God's will; true faith lays its plans in harmony with the principles of true wisdom, and then looks to God with holy confidence for support. Presumption adopts unwarranted measures to test God's faithfulness; true faith never *tests* God's promises at all, but, in the path of duty, quietly commits itself to the divine

guidance. Presumption says, now I will see whether God means what he says; and there is always a latent reservation that if he does not prosper me in this plan of mine, I will trust him no more. Faith knows God is true; walks in the dark as well as in the light; says: Though he slay me, yet will I trust him. Thus Christ discriminates between faith and presumption. If the motive was to test God's faithfulness, he needed no such test, for his faith was always strong and clear. If it was to display the divine power, and thus, as Messiah, put himself at once at the head of the Jewish hierarchy, the time had not yet come; the people were unprepared for such a manifestation; it would have been a mere vain display, issuing in nothing, to be treated as the trick of a juggler, exciting wonder and excitement, without one good result. For the kingdom of Christ was to be established on his life and his teachings, as well as on the manifestation of supernatural power. He, as man, was subject to law, and this required that his life should be in perfect accord with the will of God. His course was ever guided by wisdom. How cautious is he in exposing himself to danger, or in placing himself in the hands of the people, when they wished to make him king. How he often veils his Messiahship for the time, and retires into secret places. Never does he work a miracle, except for some beneficent end. When solicited by the Pharisees to show them a sign of his authority, he persistently refuses, and gives them only a prophetic description of his death and resurrection. Thus he holds the fuller displays of his divinity in reserve, while, by his life and teachings, he was laying the broad foundation for his kingdom,

in obedience to the divine will. Then, when his hour is come, he goes to Jerusalem; he marches right into the lions' den; he submits to the divine purpose in the assured confidence of final victory. Yet, even when in the hall of Pilate, and on the cross, he will not pray for the legions of angels to rescue him; because it was through suffering he was to triumph, and by death he was to win immortal life for millions of souls. This divine man here stands erect before the fierce temptation of the adversary, and conquers him again for us; we were in his eye and in his heart at that hour. And for two thousand years his sublime victory has been the inspiration of innumerable souls in their trials and temptations.

Let us learn the lesson he teaches us to-day. 1. We see the wide difference between true confidence in God and a presumptuous trust. Faith is always assured that God reigns; that he is ever pledged to order all events so as to promote the highest good of all true believers. Faith obeys; faith is wise and cautious in the use of the appointed means; faith compares scripture with scripture to ascertain the whole truth; faith is subject to law, and impels us to the use of the best means to gain good ends. And then it calmly commits the future to God. If trials come, if sorrow, bereavement, loss of property, loss of health, death come, in the path of duty, it trusts, with absolute assurance, the divine promise; and rising above these external trials, it triumphs even before it enters the pearly gates. But presumption is blind; it is self-seeking; it trusts without warrant; it does not seek fully to know and do the divine will; it makes an imagination to be reality, because it is not willing to see as it

ought ; it is not cautious, nor wise ; it lays its plans without reference to the divine will, and then hopes God will prosper it. If it is a man's duty to go to England, he looks out for the best and safest means of conveyance, and then faith commits the issue to God ; but presumption goes blindly, without the highest reference to duty, boards a crazy craft, and still hopes God will send a safe deliverance.

But, 2d, presumption is both wicked and dangerous. It is always founded in sin, and ends in death ; for whatever is not of true faith, is sin. A man once had some religious emotion—once indulged a hope of acceptance with God ; now his soul is full of the world ; there is no love for God ; no spirit of prayer ; no penitence for sin ; no cross-bearing for Jesus ; no delight in God's service ; yet he clings to that dead hope, and goes through a round of cold, formal duties, and expects somehow to be saved. Oh ! sinful, lost soul ! Did not Christ warn thee against the indulgence of such presumptuous hopes, when he told thee how many who had eaten and drunk in his presence, would knock at the gate of heaven, crying : Lord ! Lord ! open to us ! And he would answer : Depart ; I never knew you ! Faithless professor, here see how Christ resisted the temptation to presumption, and come to-night, and cast yourself at his feet, confessing your sin, or you are a lost soul.

Parents will sometimes allow their children to grow up disobedient—train them to be selfish, to prize the riches, and honors, and pleasures of life as the chief things—and then hope that God will prosper them, and save them at last. Oh ! how many curses

will be heaped on faithless parents, at the judgment-seat, by such children, when they see who have ruined them for eternity! Oh! such foolish and wicked presumption, refusing to obey God, has ruined souls innumerable.

And so there is oftentimes a great deal of sinful presumption in the way men use their bodies and their minds. They act as if health was secure to them, however much they violate its laws. And they do this without the least necessity, or only an imaginary necessity, under the undue stimulus of personal gain. There may be cases where the highest obligation rests upon a man, for a time, to work his body and mind up to the full limit of his powers; yea, where he must call upon the latent energies and reserved forces of his being; there may be exigencies in life when, for the good of others, a man must sacrifice himself as freely as he would go to a marriage festival. The physician must, in times of pestilence, expose himself to peril, and ply all his energies in ministering to others; the minister of Jesus at times has no right to consult ease, or health, or life in the work of saving men; the soldier must at times endure exposure and hardship and peril of life. But if all this is done in obedience to the voice of God clearly spoken, then whether health be broken or life itself laid on the altar, faith may grasp the promises and angels will bear up the self-sacrificing spirit, and no real harm shall touch it, but a glorious victory shall be awarded it, and a crown shall deck its brow and the blessed saints on high shall greet it with hallelujahs, and Jesus will say to it, "Forasmuch as you did it for one of these least, you did it unto me." But

the cases to which I allude are not of this character. When, to gain fortune rapidly or win worldly honors, the man, regardless of God's physical and mental laws, stretches the line to its full tension, and, under the spur of some splendid worldly prize, tasks all his powers to the uttermost, presuming that somehow God will bring him through all the same, then he acts without warrant, presumptuously, and when he goes down, he has no consolation of faith to sustain him and no assurance of God's favor.

There is abroad at this time a feverish desire for rapid accumulation, an eager and rabid thirst for riches, which leads men to forsake the old, beaten paths and launch into boundless speculations, and put their future on a single stroke of fortune. Our young men, debauched by the spectacle of here and there one who has won a prize at a single turn of the wheel, are discontented with the slow gains and old foggy ways of their fathers; they must at once ascend to the topmost round; they must at once take the reins and drive the horses of the sun. Under this impulse they regard not the plainest laws of integrity and success wrought out in the experience of all the past; they can not see that life is something grander than riches; they tread fearlessly amid pitfalls and snares, and by and by they go down. These temptations to presumption are round them on every side. But they see no Christ resisting them; they hear not the voice, "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." They will live lives of transient excitement, and with broken constitutions and broken fortunes descend to an early and a dishonored grave. So in another direction this Satanic influence impels the young into

vicious courses, with the expectation after a while of becoming moral, able, and useful men and women. "I must sow my wild oats now, and then for work and virtue and domestic life!" I tell you, my friend, these are the devil's oats. He knows better than you do that as you sow, so shall you reap. Has God ordained that a debauched, frivolous, misspent youth shall be the stable foundation for an honorable and useful life on which you can build domestic virtue and happiness? Oh! vain presumer, it is Satan who is whispering in your heart his miserable, false, wicked temptations to sin, knowing that he is conducting you to ruin.

But there are other ways in which the danger and wickedness of presumption reveal themselves. Yonder is a man who scorns and repels the imputation of either immorality or infidelity. He believes in God; he believes in the Bible; he believes that man can only be saved by repentance and faith in Christ. Is he a Christian? Has he made this truth the life of his soul? Has he repented? No, no! But then he expects to become a Christian. Some day—he has not fixed the time—he will repent, and take up his cross and follow Christ. On what does he base this expectation? On life, on health, on opportunity, on the supposition that to-morrow shall be as this day. Who induced him to live in sin with that expectation? God? No, the devil. The devil whispered, "Thou shalt not die." Time enough yet; a little more sleep, and he has yielded. Sabbath after Sabbath he has been tempted, and he has yielded. He presumes without a particle of warrant that he will have the time and the opportunity to repent, though he neglects

the present hour. Is it not so? If you were sure death would knock at your door, would you not cry out, "What shall I do to be saved?" O man! thou art presuming wickedly on the long-suffering patience of thy God. Tempt him not again to-night. Look to Jesus, as he endured this and all other temptations for you, and he will give you the victory now over your great adversary. Has not God spoken to you in a voice of thunder the last week? Hear you not still ringing in your ears the cries of those agonized souls as in that wrecked and burning car they went in an instant to their account? \* Beware, or your feet standing on slippery places will slide in due time.

But time would fail me to bring out all these cases of wicked presumption, to show you how men tempt God by acting on the supposition that He is too good to damn the wicked; and therefore somehow, no matter how clear Christ is in his threatenings, somehow all men will be saved. Temptations to a presumptuous confidence in the future unwarranted by God, are daily addressed alike to God's people and the world. It is a field where Satan sets his subtle snares to catch unwary souls. But Jesus has taught us to resist him. Only one arm can help us; only one mind is wise enough to teach us.

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\* Nearly fifty passengers killed in the wreck of car on Lake Shore road, at Angola, December 18, 1867.

## XIII.

## THE TEMPTATION.

“*And the devil, taking him up into an high mountain, showed unto him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time (εν στιγμή χρόνου). And the devil said unto him, ‘All this power will I give thee and the glory of them, for that is delivered unto me, and to whomsoever I will I give it. If thou, therefore, wilt worship me, all shall be thine.’ And Jesus answered and said unto him, ‘Get thee behind me, Satan, for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.’*”—  
Luke iv. 5-8.

It was remarked, in my discourse on the second temptation, that Matthew followed the order of time, and Luke of place, in the record of the temptations. In the order of time, this temptation is the third and last. The same question respecting the literalness of the temptation occurs here as in the second temptation. One class of interpreters suppose that Satan acted directly on the mind of the Savior, exciting the same ideas which would have been obtained by a direct vision of the world's power, as if he were on some lofty eminence, while in reality he might have been anywhere in the desert. The view which seems to me best to harmonize with the narrative is that the devil actually took Christ to the top of a mountain from which he could obtain a wide view, and then, with this

natural advantage as a basis, excited the idea of this vast world-power. The devil could unquestionably use all the advantages he possessed to make this temptation effective. Now, it is one of the most common laws of the mind that the direct view of an object, even in part, suggests ideas connected with it, and enhances the force of these ideas, however excited. The view which Nebuchadnezzar had of Babylon from his palace raised in him ideas of his own power and skill, and gave a wonderful expansion to his pride. Napoleon's visit to Egypt gave special power to the idea of a vast oriental empire, if it did not excite it. The familiar case of the young man, who, after he had wasted his patrimony by intemperance, ascended an eminence overlooking it, and there resolved to reform his life and win it back, illustrates the same law. His position on that eminence, the sight of the lands once his, but his no more, was the decisive point in his life; the influence of that view strengthened the desire, which then and there ripened into the purpose never to rest till they were his again. Every one knows how a position in the national councils and the vision of power stirs and enhances ambition; how mingling with men successful in winning large fortunes fires thousands with a passion for such large accumulations; how listening to a man of eloquence kindles the desire to be eloquent. If a person has a gold mine in which he wishes others to take stock, he brings home a few nuggets of gold, and straightway the sight of the little excites a vision of the great. This is a common principle; men everywhere act on it in appealing to their fellow-men. The devil knows this law of action thoroughly; he has always acted on it, and does now,

in seducing men into sin. In the effort to tempt our Savior, he would have acted foolishly and unlike himself not to have availed himself of it. Taking him to the summit of a commanding eminence, with a vast prospect of towns and cities around him, then, how easily could he have excited ideas of the world beyond; how easily could he make the vision of the present swell out into and mingle with the vision of what was beyond. Thus, in an instant, on this visible basis, did he construct in the mind of Jesus a panorama of the world's power and glory, and make it a living reality—the mightiest temptation ever addressed to a human soul.

It is said the devil showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. The human mind has immense capabilities of thought, of which now and then in actual life we get a glimpse. In moments of peril, as in drowning, the vision of a whole life is sometimes present; and Satan, in order to do his work effectually, possessed and used this power of developing in the mind of Jesus instantaneously a view of all the great powers of the world in their most attractive form.

Let us now pass directly to the temptation. “All this will I give thee.” Ambition for power is said to be the infirmity of noble minds. History shows that it is just as often the vice of the ignoble and the base. The desire of power to effect *good* ends may exist in the heart of an unfallen angel. It is just as innocent as the natural desire for food. But in all the truly good it is qualified and limited by a sense of responsibility to God for its use; by a perpetual reference to him as its source, and to his will in respect to its po-

session. In them it never overpasses the limits of his authoritative permission ; it is kept in subjection to his command, and in harmony with every other right principle. When it goes beyond this, it becomes selfish ; it ministers to personal exaltation ; it disavows the moral principles ; it is the most fruitful principle of evil in the universe. Then it becomes a satanic power ; then it curses and desolates alike the possessor and those over whom he exercises it. Power is the greatest prize that can be offered to man ; power brings the world to your feet ; power lays its hand on all earthly possessions and gratifications ; power controls and subdues minds and hearts ; power combines in itself everything in the whole range of enjoyment that can appeal to the corrupt heart. This desire of power, thus perverted to purposes of self-aggrandizement, tends ever to infinite mischief. This perverted ambition makes a law for itself, and overrides the law of God and the rights and interests of men, whenever that law or those interests are in conflict with its spirit of self-aggrandizement. All down through the ages, to the unconvicted traitor who incarnated in himself the forces of the late rebellion, bloody and terrible illustrations of this fact reveal themselves at every step. And when you ascend from the little prizes that tempt most men, to the great power of a kingdom, and from one kingdom to the universal sovereignty of the world, then you aggregate together all the things which men most desire, into one grand temptation, beyond which in this world it is impossible for you to go. This was the glory and the power which the tempter now offers to Jesus. Vastly less temptations than this had prevailed over the highest virtue ever

possessed by men; their price was easily paid; but now that he is dealing with the Son of God, now that his skill and force had been so far resisted, he must ascend to the summit of human ambition; he must combine in one temptation all earthly power and glory, and with all his diabolic ingenuity and force of will press it upon the heart.

Consider, now, what this temptation involved.

1. The gift of Satan carried with it the visible sovereignty of the world; it carried with it the world-power with all its glory; it made Christ the imperator of the world, and all its kings and princes his lieutenants; it brought to him at once, without any change of heart, all the powers of earth. Judea would have installed him king; Rome would have made him emperor; China and Hindostan would have acknowledged his supremacy, and all kings and kingdoms would at once have become visibly his. All the art, all the intellect, all the beauty, all the wealth, all the powers of the earth would have done him homage. Can you conceive a temptation addressed to humanity mightier than this? This was the very motive-force with which Satan, failing to seduce our Lord, has ever since attempted, and with fearful success, to corrupt his disciples. This spirit created prelates, archbishops, cardinals, and the pope as a universal monarch, claiming supremacy over all kings and kingdoms; this led to the abandonment of the original simplicity of worship, and developed a religion of outward pomp and show and form, assimilating the church to the visible glory and power of world-powers; this is the spirit of antichrist, called by the apostle, with condensed energy, the "wicked," as if it were the very essence of evil,

which everywhere seeks to substitute man's power and visible glory and personal distinction and aggrandizement for the power of faith and prayer and the simple preaching of the gospel of Jesus. It matters not that this spirit veils under spiritual authority and nominally recognizes Jesus; for in its essence it is a world-power which Jesus refused to take; it is the pride and glory of this world baptized with the name of Christianity. This has ever been, since Christ established his kingdom on earth, the grand artifice of the Devil to ruin it. Kings, for doing its behests in the slaughter of millions of innocent people, have been styled by it "defenders of the faith," "most Christian majesties." Good men have been seduced by the glare of pride of a state establishment to yield to its influence. The visible ever has a tremendous power over men. And Satan, when he tempted Christ, raised that power to its loftiest altitude, infused into it the condensed force of which it was susceptible, and wielded it with all his satanic art to win him over to his side. Yea! had not prophecy declared that all kings should fall down before him, and all peoples should serve him? And was he not, in accepting this gift, actually fulfilling prophecy, and securing the very position of power long promised to him of right? Now, you are to bear in mind that Jesus was left in his naked humanity—the same humanity which you and I possess, yet without sin—to grapple with this temptation as Adam grappled with and fell before the first. He was susceptible to just such temptations as have laid low the whole race. He was enduring in his person the concentrated force of all the powers of evil that assail our entire humanity. If you say that Christ was aim-

ing at spiritual objects, and could not be tempted by the attractions of this world-power, you virtually deny his humanity. For in the long list of souls you can not find one, not one, insensible to such appeals, nay, not one who has not fallen before a power of temptation no more to be compared with this than the tread of an insect with the crushing force of an elephant.

2. This temptation involved an appeal to the fears of Christ, and to his feelings of kindness to his own disciples. Christ could not fail to be moved by the sufferings which in himself and afterward in the persons of his disciples were to be endured. His kingdom was to advance against the depravity of the human heart and with Satan in opposition, against all the art and malice by which that depravity would be excited, aggravated, and directed. Jesus himself had an immediate future of darkness and suffering before him. At each step of his progress, he was to be met by opposition. His sensitive soul was to be harassed and troubled by the outbreaking depravities of men; while at the close of his mortal life, a death the most horrible, ever stood clearly defined awaiting his coming. His church, his people were to pass through all forms of trouble. He declares that his advent was like the sending forth of a flaming sword among men. Families would be divided; there would be strifes and conflicts among states and nations around his cross. Soon the prediction began to be fulfilled. In Judea, in Greece, in Rome, in all parts of the world, true piety has been met by princes and people with a malignity of opposition and a cruelty of persecution unknown to Paganism itself. All forms of torture, all kinds of suffering have been meted out to men and women inno-

cent of crime, guilty of nothing but believing on the Lord Jesus Christ. Millions have suffered death, millions have been disfranchised, despoiled of property, their name made a hissing and a by-word, for confessing Jesus to be their Redeemer. So steady, so varied, so remorseless, so artful and systematic has been this opposition, that every man at once feels the truth of the apostle's words—we fight not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against spiritual wickedness in high places. There is a Satanic power of stimulation and direction that has been at work to corrupt the church itself and turn it into an engine of oppression against the true disciples of Jesus; there is a mind at work with peculiar force, rousing the malignant opposition of the world against the doctrines and the person of Jesus. Looking down the ages, Christ distinctly foresees these sad pages of the history of his church written in the tears and blood of his own people. He heard even there the souls of martyrs crying from under the altar, How long, O Lord! A vision such as this, of scenes the most horrible, in the long travail of all the centuries never before presented itself in one lurid painting, all alive with suffering, to the mind of man. Jesus alone takes it all in at a glance; the divine vision passes before him; he sees, he knows, he feels it through and through his sensitive soul. And now the tempter comes to blot out that vision, to join forces with him, to act as his friend rather than his enemy; to abate if not wholly remove all this outward opposition; to make this force of evil decent and submissive; to save the church from corruption; to quench the fires of martyrdom; to open the dungeon and break the rack in

pieces, and convert the world-power into a friendly assistant ; malignity into friendship ; scoffs into kisses ; war into peace ; the slow, lingering, painful advance of his kingdom into a triumphal procession. Ah ! tell me not there ever has existed a soul sensitive to its own suffering, more sensitive to the sufferings of those it loves, that would not be affected by such a change as this ! The father has said, Slay me, but save the mother and children ! Filial love has laid itself on the altar for parents ! And is not Jesus moved by such a future for his own people, and could there be a temptation of mightier power addressed to his pure soul, awake to all the horrors impending over his people, than this which promised them a peaceful life, and himself a peaceful field on which to advance in his conquests over the hearts of men ? In the preparations and conditions favorable to the advance of the gospel in the hearts of men, can you conceive of anything more desirable than the abatement and total withdrawal of the opposition of that gigantic mind and his array of subalterns, who have excited and organized the depravities of mind into systematic effort against the kingdom of Jesus ; who have corrupted the original religion of the world into a ministration of sensuality and sin ; who have fired the hearts of rulers with the spirit of persecution ; who have brought about the subjection of the outward church to the state and introduced into it the corrupt hierarchies and pomp and glory of a world-power, and turned it into an engine for the destruction of all true Christian liberty and simple piety, and who, it is declared, would, did God permit it, deceive with their infernal plausibilities the very elect themselves ? Is it not

given in prophecy that when Jesus shall have entered upon his highest triumph in this world, and the time shall come when the lion and the lamb shall lie down together, and the true people of God shall be in the vast majority, and the scepters of kings shall all be lowered to the cross, and peace, and intelligence, and piety, shall fill the world with the fragrance of Eden, that for a decade of centuries this power of darkness shall be chained and his minions confined in their appropriate prison, and Christ shall reign over him and all the powers of evil? And is it possible to concentrate in one temptation motives more affecting, considerations of vaster moment this side the throne of God, than Satan himself here presents to the heart of Jesus?

For be it remembered that, in the terms of this contract, Satan is not to interfere with or prejudice the grand object of Jesus, the salvation of men, and the illustration of the wisdom of God in the gospel; he is to withdraw his opposition and unite his forces with those of the Savior to clear the field of those malignant powers which have ever been at work to destroy the souls of men. All fair enough this for the devil; all plausible enough; so plausible that the same temptation presented in inferior forms has availed to debauch the loyalty of unnumbered millions.

It has been said, indeed, that Satan promised to give what he did not possess. In the sense of right this is true, but as a fact it is not true. Usurpation is a crime, but it may be a fact. Louis Napoleon may be a usurper and a perjurer, but he is emperor and wields the power of France for all that. The devil lied when he implied that God had committed to him this world

as its ruler. In that infinite wisdom which one day will vindicate itself, he had been permitted to usurp this power, just as wicked men are allowed to live and perpetrate crimes that shock humanity; but he really possessed it for the time. The fact is written all over the world's history; the world-power has been largely Satanic, and is to this day. The Scriptures distinctly recognize it; Jesus himself and his apostles everywhere recognize it, and recognize it as a power of opposition to his truth—a power to be dethroned and destroyed as the Gospel advances to its final triumph. And when Satan proposed to abandon his opposition and use his power in favor of Christ, he did what he was apparently able to do. Whether he really meant to do it, is another question.

We must look now at the condition of this extraordinary proposition. And here we shall see the Satanic spirit in its consummate flower—"If thou therefore wilt worship me, all shall be thine." This involves three things. (1.) The term translated is sometimes used to express the homage of an inferior to a superior. Satan would have Jesus acknowledge his inferiority. This is its lowest sense. (2.) In the circumstances it involved the recognition of the legitimacy of Satan's claims to the possession of the world. Jesus must do fealty to him as the original sovereign, and hold the world as his gift. Satan is the real prince, and Christ his dependent. (3.) It involved something more than even these things. The term worship is used in its highest sense as a recognition of the divine. For Jesus to worship Satan was to give divine homage. This is clearly implied in the Savior's answer. He sees at once the enormous pride, pretension, and

wickedness of the tempter. He sees through all his plausibilities and his robes of light the hideous form of the malignant chief of the fallen angels. Up to that moment he may not have been fully assured who this person thus engaged might be; but the proposition to worship him tears the veil from the face of the deceiver. The thought is horrible; the wretch who makes it, loathsome. At once, in the majesty of a pure soul, of the Son of God, with divine authority, he breaks forth upon him: "Get thee behind, *Satan!* it is written, 'Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.'" Our translation falls short of the condensed energy of the original "*Ἰπαγε, ὀπίσω μου, Σατανᾶ.*" Avaunt, Satan! Away with you! Out of my sight, opposer of God and man! God, thy God, is the only object of true worship. Thou art a vile impostor, a malignant monster. Away from me! Your words are deceptive; your breath pollution. Get you gone to the regions of darkness where you belong. Jesus has met and baffled the mightiest powers of darkness. Jesus, erect in the consciousness of love and loyalty to God in his humanity, repels the highest temptations that can ever assail the soul. The taint, the shadow of sin rests not upon his heart. He comes forth from his great conflict pure as love and strong as faith. Henceforth, with intense malignancy, the baffled tempter, conscious of defeat and foreseeing that his time is short, will rage and plot and stir up the world-power, which Christ refused at his hands, to retard the progress of the gospel. He will enter the councils of the scribes and Pharisees, and excite and spur them on to nail him to the cross. He will

enter the hearts of emperors and kings to thunder against the coming kingdom. He will seduce the Christian church into heathenish rites and worldly pomps to corrupt its life. He will rear inquisitions to rack and burn simple believers. He will put new energy into his legions everywhere, by all means, to oppose this Jesus of Nazareth. But he is a defeated usurper. And he who has risen victorious over his temptations will conquer and advance until the full time appointed of God has come, when he shall be chained forever in the hell he has deserved.

And now, after the conflict and victory, comes rest. Other beings had watched this scene with intense interest; for Matthew tells that as the devil retires, angels ministered to him. They supplied the wants of his body; they communed with his tried spirit. They breathed round him heavenly peace and joy, and from this victory they gathered the foretokens of a greater victory, when on the cross expiring he should cry, "It is finished!" Here behold the issue of resistance to evil; here see how he who gives all to God gains all; how he who braves all for this, his Master's favor, shall win for his soul in the hour of trouble the ministrations of angels and the eternal favor of his Lord.

And now let us look at some of the points which this part of the life of Christ illustrates.

1. The world-power is the strongest of all the temptations which can assail the heart of man. Satan reserves it for his final effort, because he knew how irresistible it had been to man in every age; for this power is not one, but many. He who has it, has all other worldly things at his command. To be able to

say to this man go and he goeth, and to that man come and he cometh—to wield consciously a power that governs and controls others—has to most minds a wonderful fascination. But when to this is added personal security, honor, and glory; when to these are added the ability to gratify every taste and lust, then the fascination, is to any man unaided by the spirit of God, irresistible. The influence of this power to break down virtuous principles is among the saddest and most marked triumphs of Satanic cunning. As a world-power it is not in harmony with Christ. Ambition for self-aggrandizement is its real principle; the methods which are employed to win and maintain and use it harmonize with its corrupt source. I say not that a good man may not desire and use power for noble objects; but it is a fact that this world-power has ever been so thoroughly constituted of impure elements, and springs usually from such evil sources, and finds itself compelled so often to accommodate itself to the corrupt passions and maxims of those with whom it has to do, that it has become practically a possession of the devil. He did not lie when he asserted his power over these governments and kingdoms. To him more than to any other power have their scepters been lowered; his spirit has been worshiped here, and his maxims followed with more intense enthusiasm than anywhere else. He has been the great contracting party on one side, and kings and princes and courtiers and legislators on the other. He asks for worship; they ask for power. Courts have ever been unfavorable to piety; men in power, or men seeking for power, have rarely ever hesitated to crucify Christ

and enthrone Satan. Now and then one appears of this sort, anomalous, strange, a wonder among men. In our own land, where power is given but for short periods, and our rulers pass right up to its possession from the bosom of the people, it would seem as if it would be stripped of half its corrupting influence. Yet let any one mingle with our legislators at Albany or Washington; let him watch the intrigues, the rivalries, the jealousies, the influences at work in molding legislation; then let him uncover the secret lives of those who pass at home for honest and virtuous people, and he will be convinced that even here the trail of the serpent is seen in the capitol, and the world-power, true to its instincts, has no surer ally than the prince of darkness. In courts or congress, in emperors' palaces or papal vaticans, everywhere this dark spirit is felt to be present, and his secret suggestion is ever this or that will I give thee, only worship me. The history, the brief history, of this republic of ours is strewn all over with the wrecks of moral character—wrecks not merely of the little and the weak, but of the stalwart, the great, the once noble, the eloquent, the clear-minded, fitted by all natural gifts and training and discipline and high attainments to lead this people up to the heights of national prosperity and renown. Such is that power of the world which Jesus resisted and trode beneath his feet.

2. This scene teaches Christ's kingdom comes not by alliance with the world—that it is not identical with its form or method or spirit. Jesus affirmed this principle when he refused the Jewish crown, and declared, "My kingdom is not of this world." The world-power is visible; its glory is in outward show, in

pageantry, in dress, in wealth, in stately palaces, in armies and retinues, in feasts and earthly indulgence. But Christ's kingdom is not visible, save in the pure excellencies it creates. It is not in a palace or a hovel; it asks for no army, with its sword of steel. It moves forward by no earthly power. Christ's kingdom was in the hearts of his apostles and early disciples. It is in the heart of that man, be he poor or rich, who gathers his household about him daily to read his word lovingly, and pours his soul out in grateful, trustful, penitent prayer. It is in the heart of that young man who, conscious of his sinfulness, casts himself on God's mercy in Jesus Christ, and seeks from henceforth to do his holy will in all his life. It is everywhere, in every heart where there is love and faith and obedience. His kingdom cometh not with observation, as does the world-power. No trumpet's blare heralds it. No earthquake, no tempest's shock attends it. It is in the still, small voice that speaks to the soul; it is in the sweet promise that fills the mourner's heart with submission and holy joy; it is in the solemn appeal that thrills the spirit and nerves it for self-denial and prayerful effort, go preach my gospel to every creature; it is that home where a faithful servant of the Redeemer ministers heavenly consolation to the dying; it is in the heart of the young soldier who exclaims as he is departing, Jesus is mine, I am going home; it is in the meeting for prayer, when Christ is present and his spirit moves upon the heart, and he reveals himself a forgiving, loving, prayer-answering Redeemer. Oh! not in splendid cathedrals hath Christ his home. Oh! not by gorgeous rites and costly offerings is he attracted. His home, his kingdom, is in the living

temple of the heart renewed by his spirit and purged by his blood from the pollution of sin, and made meet in offered love and faith for his indwelling.

3. Jesus, in resisting this and the former world-wide temptations, became the source of power to all who will believe on him. His victory is not for himself alone. These temptations, this tempter, meet us all. The Christian life is conflict. Fight the good fight of faith, is our motto; In Christ we conquer, our battle cry. Our nature defiled by sin, our passions and lusts exaggerated by indulgence, the power of the visible world-power and its fascinations enhanced by past subjection to it, we are ever in the condition of Peter venturing to walk upon the water, and must, like him, ever cry, Lord save, or I perish. He who trode the water as the land has an arm mighty to save. Not for himself alone did he conquer; it was for you, for me; in our weakness he came forth victorious. You feel the power of some secret lust, you fear the power of some sinful habit, the love of the world, ambitious desires for its pride and pomp of power are strong in you, perhaps the intoxicating cup has poured its venom through your veins, or the world's amusements wreath their gilded chains around you, and how can you escape; oh, how can you be and live the Christian? How can you resist these temptations and consecrate yourself to the heavenly service and self-denial of Christ's kingdom? Look up, oh soul! See thou one mighty to save! One who has rescued men from debauchery and crime of every dye, and carried them in his arms, and given them strength for their day; yea, even in martyrs' fires has made them sing the song of heaven! When Theodore Frelinghuysen en-

tered the senate chamber, Judge Wayne said he came with a reputation for sincere piety; but, said he, we thought we could laugh that out of him. The force of ridicule is great; the force of the world-power there greater still. Did he succumb, did he cease to be the Christian because he was a senator? No! said the judge; his quiet Christian manhood disarmed; we could not touch him. Every man respected him. Political opponents made him the arbitrator of their difficulties. His Christian integrity, his Christ-like spirit inspired even the utterly ungodly with profound esteem. Why was it? He looked to Jesus; he started the congressional prayer meeting; he led not a few of those ambitious men to know Jesus. He worked for his master while he loved and trusted him. Unharméd, without the smell of fire, he passed the fiery ordeal, for one like the Son of Man was by his side. And you too, weak and sinful, in conflict with temptation, you too, may have this Christ to be your strength.

## XIV.

## HIS PLAN.

*“Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets; I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.”—Matthew v, 17, 18.*

THIS passage settles at once, and forever, with all who receive the words of Christ as divine truth, the fact that he had a plan of life, thoroughly understood, from the commencement of his ministry. These are not the words of one seeking after truth, or feeling his way through the world, and accommodating his conduct to varying circumstances. They are the lofty and confident assertions of a mind that surveyed alike the past, the present, and the future; that knew the precise point at which he stood—the precise relation he sustained to the kingdom of God in the special work, in all its parts, which he was to perform. The supposition that Christ was the outgrowth of the spirit of his age, as Confucius and Homer were of theirs; that he was the creation of circumstances, and formed his plans as did Alexander or Buddha, is not only false to his own declarations, but makes his life a sublime enigma, infinitely less susceptible of faith than the plain and consistent historic record. The greatest and the wisest men who have lived on earth and

wrought great reformatations, or established new systems of religion, or founded great kingdoms, have never realized at the outset the work before them, or formed a well-digested plan to which they adhered with inflexible tenacity until it was executed. An idea of some kind they have had, but it was an idea looming up in fog, ill defined, and not embodied in the means by which it would ultimately become a fact. The moment they attempt to attain their object, then the providence of God comes in, and, working above them, alters, modifies, or changes entirely their pre-conceived notions of means and ends. Their plans change to suit circumstances over which they have no control, and which they could not foresee. In one direction, and that the very direction in which they had planned to move, obstacles insurmountable by all their genius suddenly spring up, while in another direction, never contemplated by them, a wide path is opened, facilities for progress come to their assistance, and they have but to go forward to insure success. Thus divine Providence perpetually baffles the cherished plan, and forces them into new lines of action. When their work is done, then we often attribute to them a wisdom and a foresight which they never possessed; we give to them the credit which belongs alone to the mind and power of Him in whose hands they were mere agents, blind and foolish in respect to the real work performed. Napoleon is the most remarkable intellect of the past or present. Intellectual power reached a height in him never surpassed. It was the force of abstract reasoning combined with a clear perception of the relation of means to ends, and a pene-

trating insight into the future, and a prodigious energy of will, and a magnetic influence over men, that fitted him to plan and execute with the highest probability of success. Yet how did his magnificent ideals vanish! How did his wisest plan issue in failure! How did the star of his destiny—in recognizing which he blindly recognized the power of a providence above, he could neither foresee nor control—set in cloud and storm! When Luther nailed his theses to the church-door in Wittenberg, did he foresee the mighty reformation that act inaugurated? When Calvin was passing through Geneva, intending to hide himself where he could pursue his studies at leisure and mature his system of theology, Farel and Viret arrested him, kept him there, changed his plans for the future; and thus, without designing it, he became the restorer of the church in its primitive and apostolic simplicity, and organized the forces that were to save the world. When Wesley began his career he had no thought of establishing a church outside of the establishment of England; God subverted his plans and made him the organizer of a new monument to Christ, whose progress and results he never foresaw. Thus in all the great leaders of the world you see mere working and planning, with little foresight, with but faint conceptions of their true relations to the past or the future, altering, amending, or wholly changing their plans to meet and accommodate the providential circumstances which they could not anticipate. This is the uniform course of all these human leaders, no matter how vast their learning, how searching their intuitions, how great their force in action.

But when you turn to Jesus the comparison brings

out a difference absolutely astounding. In every aspect in which he is viewed, in the object, in the plan, in the means, and in the execution, the comparison ceases, and the difference rises into a most startling contrast. At a single step we ascend from the natural to the supernatural—from the human to the divine. The more profound and varied our investigations the grander and more divine does Jesus appear, until, like Thomas, touching his pierced body after the resurrection, we exclaim, My Lord and my God! My object, to-night, is to illustrate this thought. I feel, however, that in the brief limits of a discourse it is impossible to do justice to a subject so vast and profound. I can but indicate a few of the main points in this discussion, trusting that they may assist your personal investigations into this wonderful life.

I will now state, in a few words, the position which Jesus occupies, and which exalts him and his plans infinitely above all prophets, apostles, reformers, or leaders of any kind that have ever lived on earth. He assumes that he is essentially, centrally, and vitally related to the whole church in the past and in the future. He assumes that all the arrangements of God for the establishment and preservation of true religion and for the salvation of men, from the fall to that hour, had a direct reference to him as the being whose appearance they anticipate, and in whom they were all fulfilled and completed. He assumes that the vital force of redemption was all derived, during those long ages, in anticipation, from his life and death. He assumes that the Church of God in the future derives its character and its saving power wholly from him. He stands before us

with a divine comprehension of all the past, as the end of the law, its sublime fulfillment for righteousness. He stands before us with an equally divine comprehension of all the future, as the source of all religious life and salvation to the church in all time to come. All this is involved in the text. This he declared in a great variety of forms; this he taught his disciples and inspired them to unfold; this harmonizés alike his teachings and his life; this is justified by the history of the old dispensation, which he closed, and the history of the law, which he opened.

Let us look, now, more in detail at this subject, and see how the plan of Jesus rises right out of this double and vital relationship to the church in the past and the future. First, his relation to the past. "The law and the prophets" stand for the Old Testament dispensation. They include the history of the church from its origin; the revelations of God; the means appointed for producing and preserving religious faith, and all the preparations in the line of the Jewish people for one grand event. At the outset our first parents are placed under the divine law in its simplest form. They disobey this law and incur its penalty. Then commences a singular and wonderful history. They are spared and permitted to live under a probation of mercy. But this exercise of mercy is based upon a remarkable fact—the fact that one should arise, who, in his own person, should vindicate the dishonored authority and law of God. Couched under the figurative language of "the seed of the woman that is to bruise the serpent's head," lies that great doctrine of a Redeemer, who in our stead is to die and bear our sins. Now, from this point we have two

great agencies designed to keep up and impress this idea of a Redeemer upon the minds of men and prepare the way for its realization, and then, after a time, a third is added to these. One of these is the prophet preacher, raised up at intervals and inspired by God himself—Adam, Enoch, Noah, the great preacher of righteousness, Abraham, and all the long line, culminating in John the Baptist. These held up the idea of true religion, of faith in God and the promises, of a Redeemer-Messiah in whom all the nations are to be blessed. The other is the institution of bloody sacrifices. These were given to the world in direct connection with the promised Messiah. These held forth the idea that without the shedding of blood there is no remission. These impressed upon all men the connection between a sacrificial death and the atonement for sin. These evinced that something more than penitence was necessary to justify God in forgiving sinners. These were everywhere the types of, and the preparation in the minds of men, for the atonement on the cross.

Then, after the flood, God separated the family of Abraham to himself, declaring to him expressly that in one of his descendants all the nations were to be blessed, and that he chose him and his posterity for the purpose of preserving his worship until that time should come; and when this family assumed the proportions of a nation he gave them national laws, a national priesthood, and a separate country, expressly to isolate them from other nations and prepare the way for the coming of the Messiah.

Then Jesus appears. He takes into his mind this whole vast system, its prophetic teachings, its sacrificial

types, its national institutes. His mind flashes light upon every part of it. The glosses, the traditions, the false, narrow, crude interpretations that have distorted and obscured it vanish before the sublime simplicity of his annunciations. Its grand idea with all the related ideas instantly reveal themselves. Its mysteries, its obscurities, its indications, its faint outlines, its sacred words are clear and full, as the whole tracing and life of the world are distinct and visible when the sun has risen. Nor is this all. He assumes that for his appearance all these preparations of the ages were made; that this great system of agencies, laws, and revelations, was instituted expressly with sole reference to him and his work on earth. He assumes that he is the seed of the woman who is to bruise the serpent's head and repair the ruins of the fall; that he is the great sacrifice by whose shed blood sin is to be atoned; that he is the seed of Abraham in whom all nations are to be blessed; that he is the great prophet of whom Moses wrote; that he is the Son of David, who is to rule all nations and found an everlasting kingdom; that he is the sufferer of whom Isaiah prophesied, who is to bear our sins in his own body; that he is the Lord that should suddenly come into his temple, spoken of by Malachi; and that he is the Messiah come, whom John preached. In him the design of all the law and the prophets is completed; up to this point all the conditions they represent, all the work they were designed to accomplish, are substantiated and answered and accomplished in his life. Sweep them all away; prophets, laws, sacrifices, national institutes; let them perish from the earth; their work is done,

their purpose fulfilled; for He, the Messiah, is come who is to make all things new.

Now it is obvious that this position which Christ occupies in reference to the past history of the church determines his character, his work, and the entire plan for its accomplishment. Just as the fruit of a tree is determined by its roots, its trunk, and its branches, so what Jesus was to be and to do was determined by his relation to all these preparations for his appearance. He must be divine as well as human, for only a divine intellect can compass this whole scheme in its infinite wisdom. His work and the plan for its execution must correspond with these vast preparations; for only thus will they completely fulfill the law and the prophets, and answer all the ends they design and anticipate. Christ's character and work are the central, the essential part of a magnificent scheme of religion that reaches from Adam to the conflagration. But to unfold this thought more fully, we must now look at his relation to the future church. In doing this, we must give the outlines of his plan and work as the Redeemer.

*First.* He establishes a kingdom which is spiritual and universal. The fundamental idea of this kingdom is a renovated heart. At the outset of his ministry he declared this in terms the most positive and explicit. "Except a man be born again, he can not see the kingdom of God." "Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye can not enter the kingdom of heaven." Renewed, penitent, believing hearts are the elements and the sole elements of this kingdom. The Jew was born into the outward church; he became a member of it by inheritance. His standing in that church was determined solely by his parents. As a

Jew he was entitled to all its rights and privileges, whether he in heart truly loved God or not. Jesus abolishes this whole national system of religion. To them and to them only who "received him, gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them which believe on him; which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." Henceforth there are to be no more purely national or state religions, but one church, of which only they are true members who have been born from above, who have felt and yielded to the power of a divine spirit, who, penitent for sin, have heartily received him as their Redeemer. We have seen him in the last temptation, putting away from him a visible world-kingdom, and now we see him building a purely spiritual kingdom, with no reference to blood, or rank, or nationality. Wherever in this world a soul shall be taught and heartily receive the truth as it is in Jesus, that soul has entered his kingdom. The child blackened by an African sun, the Hindoo, the Indian, yea, whoever of our lost race, hearing the story of his life, shall believe in his heart and confess with his lips that Jesus is his Savior, is a true member of his one living, spiritual, and universal church. Forms are nothing; state lines are gone; nations, as such, are unknown. Jesus reigns over loving, believing hearts, and where these are, there is his kingdom, and over them he wields his beneficent scepter of righteousness, peace, and salvation.

This universal kingdom is contemplated in the Old Testament, and associated with the coming of Messiah. But no mere prophet ever saw it in its true nature and simplicity. The wisest of the Jews ever held on to

their formal and visible church as the central form around which the Gentiles are to gather, and in some undefined way contribute to its glory and magnificence. No mere man could have dared to abrogate and put it away. For this would have been treason against God who had established it. But Jesus, the divine man, holds in his mind the true idea; he dares to announce it, and to make it a leading feature of his plan of redemption. He unfolds the nature of that kingdom, dimly seen in the visions of prophets, and, in establishing it, revolutionizes the worship of the world.

The *second* point in the plan and work of Christ is a life which should constitute the just basis of such a kingdom. Logically, this thought precedes the other; but I follow the order of Christ himself in his annunciation of it. A kingdom such as this must have a basis as broad as the world to render it possible. The life of Jesus furnishes this foundation. This divine-human life is full of weakness and power, suffering and trial on one side, almighty force on the other; temptation to sin on one side, perfect obedience on the other; hatred, malignity, all the powers of hell arrayed against it, met by divine love and compassion; the sins of men laid on him in his last agony; death for man taking possession of his body, followed by his triumphant resurrection and ascension to glory. Jesus in his life and death, a sacrifice of obedience and suffering, answers the claims of the divine law, makes pardon possible, regeneration possible, a spiritual kingdom, all whose members rest on him in faith for salvation, possible. This is the foundation of his kingdom. Christ lives, obeys, suffers, not as a Jew, but as a

man; not for the Jew alone, but for the world. For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus; whom God has set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are *past*, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness, that he might be just and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus. Here now behold the significance and the life of those bloody sacrifices instituted when man fell and flaming up to heaven for four thousand years! Here see the grand fulfillment of the law and the prophets, as all down the ages they point with unerring finger to this divine man who is to bear sin by the shedding of his blood for the world. Where now are the bloody altars? the priestly sacrifices? the hierarchy of Aaron? the temple service? They heard the cry from the cross, "It is finished!" The real sacrifice for sin is offered and bled forever. Altar, priest, temple, all crumbled to dust, while the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world, proclaims to all men free forgiveness and eternal life for every one who in humble faith will receive and obey him as the Redeemer. Now a spiritual, universal kingdom is possible; for humanity is redeemed, and faith, repenting, receiving, loving him is the sole condition of citizenship.

*Third.* The next prominent feature of the plan and work of Christ is the revelation of truth corresponding to the nature of his kingdom and essential to its advancement. The Old Testament scriptures contain the germs of the future kingdom, because in effect it is the same at all times. The elements of truth and

piety are all there. But as the system of Moses was itself elementary and preparative, involving many things connected with the form of the church as a national institution which must pass away before the full development of the spiritual and universal church, so the scriptures must conform to that system in order to render it effective. The germs of the Messianic kingdom are there: they anticipate a better state of the church; they constantly force upon us the idea that a higher and purer life is to come. But their teachings must necessarily correspond with the imperfect and preparatory state of the church in anticipation of the appearance of Christ. Now, however, that Christ has come and his spiritual kingdom is to be established; now that the old structure, built around the church to protect its infancy and youth, is to be taken down, there must be a new, an additional revelation; the germs in the old must be unfolded in the new, and the harmony of both illustrated; the principles and constitution of this fully developed kingdom of heaven are to be revealed; the relations of men one to another and to Jesus Christ the head are to be unfolded; the position of the church and its members in the world; the practical doctrines and duties which belong to this higher state of universal religion; the means and agencies by which it is to be advanced and its future prospects must be set forth. Especially must Jesus Christ in his character, work, and relation to men as the chief object of faith be declared; while the position and influence of the Holy Spirit in the new kingdom are fully implied. In execution of this plan we have four distinct records of the life of Jesus, constituting a unique and sufficient exhibition of his

words, his works and his sufferings; a brief history of the organization and establishment of the church; various epistles unfolding the doctrines of Christianity and their relation to Christian experience and practice, and all crowned by the sublime visions of the future history of Christianity in the world of the seer of Patmos. This New Testament embodies the constitution and the laws, the faith and the practice of the kingdom of Jesus. It corresponds with the Old Testament, just as the fruit corresponds with the bud, part of which having done its work is removed, part of which as vital remains. And thus this Bible is given to man by Jesus, as the only infallible and all-sufficient rule of faith and practice. Whatever is not found here, or whatever can not be legitimately deduced from this, is of no binding obligation upon men; whatever is thus found is divine truth, which the new-born citizens of this heavenly kingdom receive into their hearts as the teachings of their divine Lord.

*Fourth.* One other feature of Christ's plan and work remains. In this kingdom Jesus himself is the immediate and living head. He is not a dead Christ, nor an abstract Christ, nor a mere prophet in heaven; he is seated at the right hand of the Majesty on high, the living source of all power and life to the church redeemed by his blood. In his name all his followers present their petitions to the Father. The divine Son is the only mediator between God and man. He sends the Spirit to renew and sanctify and comfort all who come to God by him. He draws man to him. He, as once suffering in our nature, holds us in sympathy near his heart in all our trials. He gives strength to the weak and wisdom to the foolish. He sits on the

mercy-seat full of compassion, and whoever comes to him as a little child never fails of success and support. In him the faith of men is to center for the pardon of their sins. Faith pleads all the promises in his name. Love swells up to him in warmest affection. He is the daily, hourly, ever-present, sympathizing, powerful Redeemer of his people. By faith in him they enter his kingdom; in faith they take up his cross and follow him as their Lord; in penitence they confess their sins to him and through him receive pardon and peace in their souls; and when the waters of death rise dark and sullen around them, faith cries in triumph, Lord Jesus receive my spirit! Thus as the living head of his church, present to faith, he is the Captain of salvation, leading his sons to glory, guiding his people through the perils of the earthly life and bringing them at last to worship him on the sea of glass as the Lamb in the midst of the throne, who hath washed them white in his own blood and made them kings and priests unto God.

These four points characterize the plan and work of Christ—a spiritual and universal kingdom, embracing only the truly penitent and believing; a life and death vindicating the law in the place of the sinner, and furnishing the basis on which this kingdom rests; a full revelation of the truth necessary to illustrate the nature and the laws of this kingdom; and Christ himself as the only living head of this kingdom in his divine human person.

Now, with this wonderful plan of his kingdom in view, you will see at once how it determines the general plan of his ministry and personal life on earth. (1.) Holding in his mind the idea of a spiritual and

universal kingdom, he puts away from him all thoughts of a visible, temporal power. He rejects the offer by Satan of a world-crown. He will not suffer the people to make him king. He will not allow himself to be entangled in political alliances, and answers the deceptive questions of the Pharisees, "Render unto Cæsar the things that be Cæsar's, and unto God the things that be God's." He will not use the weapons of the world-power to advance his cause. "Put up thy sword. He that taketh the sword shall perish by the sword." His kingdom is spiritual; its armor is faith; its weapons truth and love. What has he to do with earthly crowns? What to him is the temporal kingship of Judea? The nationality of the Jew was only one of the preparations for his coming. His hand is to dash it in pieces. Its work was accomplished in preparing the place and the people for the demonstration of his messiahship. Steadily, clearly, strongly, he pursues the plan of unfolding a purely spiritual kingdom, in the face of temptation, of peril, of the clamors of the people, and the indignant protests of his own disciples.

(2.) Holding in his mind the idea that he was to obey and suffer as the Lamb of God for the sin of the world, we see his life shaped and limited by this thought and the work it involved. Knowing, feeling that he was to be the propitiation for sin, shadowed forth by four thousand years of sacrifice, he does not hesitate to announce the fall of the temple and the priesthood. "Those great stones on which the temple rested, shall not be left one upon another." This idea colors and shapes his whole life. The sadness, the tears, the deep compassion for the people in their ignorance, all

testify to it. He anticipates death from the beginning; he foretells it; when the fit time came, he deliberately offered himself to it; he institutes the supper; he is sore distressed in Gethsemane; he, who had passed through the enraged multitude at Nazareth, when they sought to cast him down the precipice, follows Judas and his band to trial and the cross. This was part of the plan of his life; this the most prominent idea that controlled his movements; under its dark shadow he taught and prayed and suffered until the sacrifice was fully offered.

(3.) But these were not all the ideas that entered into and shaped the plan of his life. For this kingdom he was to establish must have its beginning in some souls; it must have a foot-hold, a place, an active agency, and a beginning on earth. Rejecting the priesthood, the rabbis, the agencies of the old system, he must create all things new. He must have chosen disciples, in whom his divine authority must be thoroughly established; to whom he will teach the great principles of his new kingdom, and fit them to be the exponents of his truth, the witnesses of his life and works, and the agents for the unfolding of his gospel and the organization of his church, when he has passed into the heavens. These ideas largely shape his plan. This work requires time. Choosing his apostles at the outset of his ministry, he instructs, he elevates, he leads them up to the high position they are to occupy.

Full of Jewish prejudices, narrow and limited in their views, he teaches them as little children, he lives with them, he works mighty miracles in their sight; gradually they rise into the light. He opens

to them step by step the pure and spiritual nature of his kingdom; he unveils to them as they are able to bear it the divinity of his nature; gradually, as their faith and knowledge increase, he approaches the subject of his death as a sacrifice for sin, and his resurrection from the grave. For months, for years, he abides with them, in private and in public, making them the witnesses of his life and his miracles, and the recipients of his truth. For this he often shunned publicity; for this he retired from the vengeful toils of the Scribes and Pharisees; for this he partially and for a time veiled the full brightness of his Messiahship. Then, when his life had a real historical foundation; when his truth had taken possession of living men, prepared to expound it and stand by it; when his divine human nature as Messiah, shining through his life, his words, his miracles, had established itself in their faith never more to be shaken, then the time for the final scenes in the momentous tragedy and the equally momentous triumph had come; then, and not till then, he goes up to Jerusalem and ascends the cross, and, dying, works the grandest miracle of time in his resurrection and ascension. These are the ideas that shaped his whole life; this the plan of action he originates at the commencement of his ministry and follows with divine presence to its close.

If, now, it should be asked whether all the little as well as the great points of his life; whether every step, and every place, and every work, and every scene were all present in order before his humanity at the commencement, I answer that the knowledge of this fact, whatever it may be, is of no consequence. Taking the principle which I stated in discoursing to

you on the divine and human, that the inferior is dependent on the superior, it is enough for us to know that the divine nature illuminated the human just so far, and only so far, as to fit his humanity for its own work. One thing is clear. Only a divine prescience could flash light on the vast preparatory system which found its fulfillment in him, and only a divine prescience could open the wondrous plan of his future kingdom. In his life with divine intuition he moves forward, never changing his plans, never foiled, always the same, until his work is done. There are no afterthoughts, no unforeseen obstacles, no hesitations, no stopping to reason out the best course, none of the weaknesses to which the greatest human intellects are subject. As in his teachings all is intuitive, profound, fresh, bright with divine light, so in his action all is clear, direct, each step contributing something to the final result. How grand, how sublime, how divine, does this life appear! Here is one to whom the wisdom of God for the redemption of the ages past and the ages to come is as familiar as the alphabet of childhood. Here is one who assumes to be the object of all the preparatory agencies and institutes of religion since the fall, and who in his life and death and resurrection vindicates the assumption. Here is one who holds in his mind the sublime idea of a spiritual and universal kingdom, unknown to, unthought of by the wisest of men, and who in these years establishes this kingdom on real, historical foundations, which its after progress and present position declare to be divine and eternal. Here is one just entering into full manhood, surrounded by institutions of religion divinely

originated, consecrated by time, imbedded in the heart of the nation, who, rejecting all temporal power, trusting only to the force of truth and the spirit of God, declares their end and dooms them to utter extinction. From him as its foundation, its leader, and its life, a new kingdom of heaven rises into existence, comes forth out of the mists and concealments and sensuous coverings of the Mosaic economy, arrayed in robes of love and compassion and faith and truth, breathing only glory to God, peace on earth, and good will to men. This, O fallen man, is our Christ, the Christ of prophecy, the Christ of history; the living, reigning Christ whom we adore as divine, whom we love as the incarnation of all perfection, whom we believe in as the savior of our souls from the power and penalty of sin. By his side, standing in childlike confidence, the law has no curse, death no sting, the grave no victory. Our life, hidden in his life and deriving from it new life, is purified, exalted, strengthened, comforted, protected, and made victorious over all the powers of the world and the devil. Here in him is the sacrifice for sin and the way of pardon and peace; here in him is the power which will make the weak strong for the ascent up the narrow way of life; here in him is light on all the dark scenes of time, light to scatter the gloom and darkness of the grave, light opening to us the secrets of immortality. Looking on him in faith, I find all I want to elevate, purify, enlighten, and save. In him the mighty promises are all yea and amen. He is the Captain of our salvation, leading us to glory. No wonder the four and twenty elders praise; no wonder the saints on the sea of glass ascribe dominion and power and glory to him; no wonder heaven rings with

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the praises of the Lamb in the midst of the throne; no wonder martyrs and confessors have trusted him and rejoiced in him amidst the fires; no wonder his people in their sorrow and trials look to him for comfort and joy; no wonder sin-convicted souls, turning from the world, cry to him for salvation; no wonder poor penitents love him who is the end of the law for righteousness. Here, O Christian, is your prophet, priest, and king. Here, O sinner, burdened, tossed, and uneasy, full of sad anticipations, is thy cure, thy comfort, thy Savior! Believe on him now to the salvation of thy soul!

## XV.

## THE FIRST DISCIPLES—THEIR TRAINING.

*“ Again, the next day after, John stood, and two of his disciples, and looking upon Jesus as he walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God! And the two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus.”—John i: 35-37.*

THE commencement of Christ's ministry contrasts strangely with its close. Unknown he emerges from the wilderness, and, mingling with the crowd, hears John testifying to his Messiahship. At his death his name is on every lip, and the heart of the nation, from Jerusalem to its remotest hamlet, throbs with tumultuous passion. He appears at the Jordan singly and without pretension. So the rill breaks from the mountain side unnoticed in its quietness—the rill that is shortly to become the mighty river, refreshing all lands and bearing on its bosom the treasures of the world.

The first object of Jesus in his ministry is the selection and training of a band of disciples. Until this is done, nothing is really done. According to his divine plan, the organization of a society embodying his principles, and prepared to proclaim them through the world, is absolutely essential. He must die, he must ascend; the headship of the Church is divine and spiritual, in him, as dwelling at the right hand of Majesty on high. His disciples on earth are to form

the organic elements of his Church, and through them it is to be constituted and advanced. Fully to prepare them is his first work. The general subject, therefore, on which I propose now to discourse is this : the choice of his chief disciples, and the method of Christ in training them.

1. It is an interesting fact that the selection of his first disciples was made from those who had attended on John's ministry, and were, by his instructions, prepared at once to attach themselves to Christ as the Messiah. Among the disciples of the Baptist there were many of the superficial, of the narrow-minded, obstinate in their prejudices, incapable of entering into the profounder views of the coming kingdom. These followed him as a prophet, and clung to him to the last. But there were others of broader views, of deeper religious insight, of larger receptivity, who better understood the aim of his preaching, and whose minds rested not on him but on Him who was to come. The effect of his instructions on them was, not to make him the center of their thoughts and hopes, but to awaken deep longings and anxious expectations in respect to Christ himself. When, then, Jesus appeared and was identified by John, they immediately attached themselves to him. "We have found the Messiah," say they. John had done his work with them. Their thoughts, their hearts, were full, not of John, but of Christ. They had begun to enter into the deeper meaning of the prophecies, and were waiting with tremulous expectation for his coming. Of these first five who seem to have been under the special tuition of the Baptist, all became subsequently apostles, and

two of them, Peter and John, rose to peculiar eminence.

There is something beautiful and fit in the fact that John should have thus prepared some of those who were to be the chief agents in the organization and establishment of the kingdom of Messiah. Jesus honored his forerunner in selecting his first disciples from those whom John had thus instructed. The prophet's work is vitally connected with the Savior's work. And while the preaching of the Baptist did much to awaken general expectation, yet if you except his direct prophetic testimony to Jesus as Messiah, the preparation of such men as Peter and John the Evangelist and their associates to receive him as Christ seems to us a work more vital and effective than all the rest. In this world it is not popularity or fame that determines the extent and power of a person's real influence. It is rather the individual minds which, under his teachings, become in turn powers of light, great forces acting on others, enlightened agents in moving and molding multitudes. Monica, the mother of Augustine, gave him, her only son, to Christ. His father would have him educated to be a philosopher, a rhetorician, a man to be known in the world. Augustine passes through the schools, wins fame as an orator, becomes a philosopher, goes from one system to another, tries all, surrenders himself to pleasure, seeks rest and finds it not. His mother follows him with prayer, with gentle, winning influence, never discouraged, ever trusting in God. At length he is brought to the feet of Christ; he enters with sublime earnestness upon the work of the ministry; he speaks that which is blest to the conversion of mu-

titudes ; he writes, and the ages listen. The influence of that mother is mightier than that of any Cæsar who ever sat upon the imperial seven hills. So in the Sabbath school, in our class, some one or more minds are being formed to brighten many minds, to brighten the whole firmament of thought for hundreds of souls. This is man or woman's highest mission, to aid in preparing human hearts to receive Jesus Christ. This was John's mission, and thus he stands vitally connected with the kingdom of Christ.

2. Let us now dwell briefly on the manner in which the disciples of Jesus were first drawn to him. You will notice at once that this varies in the case of almost each individual. In the free, spontaneous life of the new kingdom there are no fixed and rigid methods in which sinners are converted. And here, at the very outset of Christ's ministry, we have an epitome of the ways in which the power of the spirit works in bringing men into this kingdom. In the first instance, Jesus is walking, waiting, in holy communion with God, for the commencement of his work. The Baptist sees him, and points him out, as the Lamb of God, to two of his own disciples, Andrew and John the Apostle or Evangelist. They approach Jesus ; he turns and asks them, What seek ye ? They answer, Master, where dwellest thou ? Their hearts are full of another question ; they want to ask, Art thou the Messiah ? But, in their embarrassment, they change the question to one of mere courtesy ; such as they might have asked of any other person. Men are alike in the world. The things most vital to the soul, they fear to ask about ; the things which concern the body or this world, they are free to speak of, even to

strangers; but the thoughts, the anxieties, that concern the soul, they bury deep in their own bosoms; they fear to converse about them; they are unwilling to ask of a Christian friend, or their pastor: How can I find Christ, and be saved? Jesus sees their embarrassment. He has been waiting for them; with gentle courtesy, he bids them come and see. They follow him, and abide with him till the stars shine out. But from that hour the sun of righteousness, brighter than all the stars, the source from which all prophets received their light, has risen upon them. Henceforth they abide with Christ forever. Then appears another person on the stage. These disciples, full of the Savior they have found, are fired with zeal to make him known to others. For true religion is ever diffusive; it is not content with possessing Christ alone; it burns to win others, and put them in possession of the same precious treasure. Its element is love; and love is like light, penetrating everywhere, seeking to give what it possesses, to make salvation common to the world. And so Andrew seeks out his brother Simon; tells him the joyful tidings: We have found Messiah! brings him to Jesus. Then ensues a characteristic scene. Jesus at once apprehends his character, and deals with him accordingly. Peter is bold, impetuous, strong. Christ addresses him directly with divine authority and prophetic words: Simon, son of Jonas, thou shalt be called Cephes, or a stone. To change the name is an exercise of authority. Henceforth he is no more Simon—Cephes, Petra, a stone-man, the same. The Latin is Petra, and we anglicize it, Peter. The church and the world ever since have known him by that name. Jonas means a dove;

Peter, a stone. Simon, son of the dove, thou art henceforth a rock, on which I will build the church. Peter recognizes and bows to the master's authority.

Another character appears. As Jesus moves toward Galilee he finds Philip. At once he issues his command: Follow me! These words strike right into the heart, as if a thunderbolt had smitten him, and henceforth he is Christ's forever. He finds Nathanael, and tells him that in Jesus of Nazareth they had found the Messiah. But Nathanael is a man of a different sort from Philip—calm, cool, thoughtful; he is incredulous. Can any good thing come out of Nazareth? The idea was absurd, that out of so debased a village the true Messiah should rise. Philip says: Come and see. So says the true convert to the incredulous world: Come and see Jesus. Nathanael came. See now how differently Jesus treats this cautious soul: Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile. This is no flattery; it is simple truth. Nathanael answers: Whence knowest thou me? Jesus says: Before that Philip called thee; when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee! He sees at once that Jesus knows him, discerns his thoughts; hath a divine intuition that searches through him. His incredulity is gone, and he exclaims: "Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the king of Israel!"

Now here are the first five disciples won to him in a few hours, and by no less than four different methods. Does not this prove what I have said: that Jesus is limited to no fixed method in the conversion of men? This thought comes out with increasing clearness in all his subsequent life, and when we come to the his-

tory of the Christian Church we see it everywhere illustrated in times and ways and persons innumerable. In these days men often bind round themselves a set of rigid formalities and notions, beyond which they can see nothing good. They mark out for the Spirit of God a single path, along which He must move in the conversion of sinners. They distrust all methods of Christian activity for the salvation of men that do not harmonize with their narrow peculiarities. One thinks that conversion is the result of a long process of education; another, that there must be a protracted attendance on preaching; another, that it must be associated with certain ecclesiastical forms and manipulations; another, that sudden conversions are always suspicious; another, that in a revival of religion such results can only be expected. Now the Spirit of God is bound down to no man's method, and conforms His operations to no man's ideas of fitness. The church is the product of the Divine Spirit, infinitely free and wise, using all sorts of agencies, and bringing men into the kingdom by just such methods as He sees best; sometimes in revivals, and sometimes when there is no wide-spread interest in religion; sometimes after years of labor, and sometimes suddenly—like the call to Philip, flashing into the heart: Follow thou me; sometimes by means of the regular preaching of the truth, and sometimes by the regularly spoken truth of some seemingly feeble instrument. And thus it is enforced upon us that we must sow our seed by all waters; with strong hands and feeble hands; in the church and in the sabbath-school, and in the family, and out by the waysides of life. Only we must sow in prayer; sow in tearful love; sow

in humble confidence in Jesus ; not knowing whether this or that shall prosper, but confident that in the end we shall return with rejoicing, bringing our sheaves with us.

3. We come now to our principal subject in this discussion: the training of his disciples. And here there are two points on which we must dwell—the object and the method of this training. The object is the first; for this will control and give character to the entire process. And this is peculiar. It is nothing less than to secure and establish their faith in him personally. All other true teachers and reformers labor to make their scholars proficient in science, to show them truth and how to attain it. But Christ aims at making his disciples proficient in the knowledge of himself. They sink themselves and exalt science; Jesus exalts himself and sinks science. They make truth the center, and themselves only inquirers after it. Jesus makes himself the center, the way, the truth, and the life. Paul had a gigantic intellect, highly cultivated and informed with all the science of the age. But he is content to be accounted nothing, if only Jesus may be received as embodying in himself the sum of all things most needful for men to know. The author of *Ecce Homo* has grasped this thought; but he fails in developing the true ground on which it rests; his method of inquiring and the limitations he places upon himself prevented a full discussion of this vital point. The answer to the question, in what respect and to what extent did Christ train his disciples to have faith in him, will bring us right into the heart of our subject. The answer given by his teachings,

and by the subsequent exposition of his disciples, comprises the following points :

(1.) He sought to establish their faith in him personally *as divine and human*. This was a fact wholly personal; it was not an abstraction, not a mere theory, not a creation of the imagination to be inquired into and discussed as a possible or a probable thing. It was a living, concrete fact. He embodied it in his own constitution. He was the Son of Mary and the Son of God. He was divinity incarnate; in humanity, the Son of Man and Immanuel, God with us. This was in itself the grandest truth ever revealed to the mind of man—ininitely greater than all the facts and laws of natural or moral science, for it involved the source of all science, divine and human; it stood at the summit of all knowledge. Christ's feet were on earth, but the grandeur and glory of God himself crowned his head. No such thing as this had ever before appeared on earth. Pretended incarnations there had been, but they only revealed the longing of the noblest minds for such a being to new create and enlighten and save the world. They were but shooting-stars, meteors of a moment, flashing upon the darkness and then fading into night. This incarnation was the true Son rising on men, to be fixed forever in the heaven of his highest thoughts and feelings, and lighten all the race. This twofold nature in Christ was the basis of everything vital in Christianity. It invested him with supreme authority; it imparted to all he did and suffered divine efficacy. It made him personally the proper object of faith, obedience, and love. To train them, his disciples, to revere this faith and understand its real ground, was the first great ob-

ject before him. Whatever else might fail, this point, the most difficult, the vital heart of all his work, must be gained. He must be established in their deepest convictions as the true and only Immanuel—the Son of God and the Son of Man.

(2.) It was an important object in the training of the disciples to inform them respecting the precise relation in which Christ stood to the whole prophetic and Mosaic system of faith and practice. They were Jews; animated by faith in their religion as divine; incrustated round with the habits and modes of thought and feeling created by its observance. Now their sphere of thought was to be vastly enlarged; the barriers which shut them in must be broken down; life-long habits and prejudices must be leveled. They are to see the past in a new light in order to appreciate their position in the present and the future. Only thus can they be prepared for the kingdom of Jesus. They are to learn that the Jewish church was but a stage in the progress of true religion, established for a special purpose; that Christ himself was its end and fulfillment; that he was the center of the whole system of religion; that all the past dispensations, the Adamic, the patriarchal, the Mosaic, were only preparatory to his coming. They are to learn that Christ himself gave vitality and saving efficacy to the faith of prophets and the sacrifices of the law. Christianity in its essence was not a new thing in the world; it was not a new world just created. It was hidden in Christ at the heart of the old system of faith. It was respecting him the prophets inquired diligently when their sublime prophecies were to be fulfilled. He was the Messiah of prophecy, answering in his person, life, and

work to all the demands and descriptions of centuries of inspiration. He was to fulfill every prediction and meet every purpose of the ages. All the seemingly contradictory attributes and works ascribed to him by the prophets were to be reconciled in his person and life. Now that he had come, the old scaffolding was to be taken down ; national distinctions in religion are to be obliterated. The true temple is to rise in spiritual beauty, by spiritual agencies emanating directly from him. This object was of great importance. This gained, and Christ's relation to the church of the past and the church of the future appeared in all its real harmony and glory. This gained, and then the way is open for the church to take its new position as embodying a religion for all men, while it is built upon the foundation of both prophets and apostles, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone.

3. The third object to be gained in the education of his disciples was to establish them in the faith, that his life as divine and human, and his obedience unto death constitutes the sole foundation for the redemption of men. This truth, as I have said, lay hidden at the heart of the old system of faith. But now it is to come forth into light. It is to become a fact in history, and not a dimly apprehended fact in prophecy. Christ appears and lives under just the conditions suitable for effecting this great object, dies on the cross and ascends to heaven. Henceforth not what he is to do, but what he is, and has done, is to be ground of faith in him for salvation. This fact broadens Christianity and makes it coterminous in its provisions with the race. This truth is the vital power of all true religion. This gave the temple to the torch, and Jeru-

salem to the sword and plowshare of the Roman legions. This was the inspiration of its earliest and all its true victories. This gave a new civilization to the world. This single truth, that to the believer Christ Jesus is made of God, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, throbs in the air and shines in transforming, quickening light, wherever the gospel is preached. When this truth enters the heart of a sinner, when Christ comes home to him as his Redeemer, he sees all things in a new light, the scales fall from his eyes, the chains from his limbs; new strength nerves his soul; the world takes its true position, and Christ as the sun of salvation and light and power is in the center of the whole system of thought and life, around whom planets and stars and the earth all move in blessed harmony. And when once this fact was established in the convictions of his disciples, then they became soldiers of the cross; then to live was Christ, and to die was ineffable gain.

4. Then a fourth object was to train the disciples to look to him as the source of all power necessary for them in their work. He is the head, they are the body; he is the bridegroom, they the bride; he is the vine, they the branches; he is the king, they his subjects; he is the light and the truth, they his scholars; he the Redeemer, they his ransomed people. All prayer is to be offered in his name. He is to send them the spirit to guide them into truth, prepare them to expound it, and give them a personal victory over sin and death. He is the captain of salvation, leading many sons to glory. He is the author and finisher of faith to whom they must look. He is the sympathizing High Priest, ever making intercession for them and

calling them to the mercy-seat, that they may obtain mercy and find grace in every hour of need. All power in heaven and earth is given to him, and in him they have all things. In such variety of forms is the headship of Christ over the church expressed. Types, figures, metaphors, language itself seems almost exhausted in the effort to describe his vital relation to his disciples in all the conditions of their life. They were to learn this truth, learn it experimentally; it must be established in them as firmly as the heart itself. They must breathe this faith as their vital air; they must live in it as the source of all their power. These were the objects Jesus purposes in the training of his disciples. Christ as divine and human. Christ as the end and fulfillment of the law and prophets. Christ as the Redeemer of the world. Christ as the ever living head of the church.

Now all these objects are personal. They all center in the nature, relations, and work of Christ himself. You see why he trains his disciples to exercise faith in him personally; why he is the way, the truth, and the life. Other men, philosophers, taught their disciples to interrogate nature and discover its laws. Jesus, rising infinitely above them, teaches his disciples to know him—him the superior of nature, the center of a sphere of knowledge beyond nature, the life in the soul, the power on the throne, who held all natural forces as his servitors, who dwelt in the light of God and brought it down to men, who solved the great problems of man's destiny, illustrated the divine law, atoned for sin, revealed the future life, and gave power to all who received him to become sons of God. The author of "Ecce Homo" could not have gone into the

real reasons why Christ differed from all other teachers in training his disciples to have faith in him and make him their Lord, without at once emerging into the sunlight of his divinity. No other being ever existed who dared make such demands upon the faith of his disciples. No other being, if he had done so, could have justified them on grounds which millions of redeemed souls feel to be infinitely worthy. Such then is the great object of Jesus in training his disciples to establish their faith in him personally in all these respects.

Let us look now at the method of his training. First, the principles of discipleship he laid down were most strict and exclusive. Supreme loyalty to him in all circumstances must be exercised. If a person became his disciple, he must yield himself absolutely to his authority in all things. He claimed not only the right to control the outward life, but the heart itself. A man must love him more than father or mother, wife or child. He must be prepared to meet all difficulties in his service, even to the sacrifice of life; he must deny himself daily, and take up his cross and follow him. No general ever exacted such faith and obedience from his soldiers as Jesus demands from his disciples; for the general's commands reached only to acts—Christ's reach all through and around the soul. When one came to him professing a readiness to follow him, after he had buried his father, he said, "Let the dead bury their dead;" and in another case he rebuked the divided spirit which sought to combine other concerns with his service, saying, "No man having placed his hand to the plow and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." This was the principle

that sifted out the frivolous, the time-servers, the people who followed him only to see his mighty deeds, with no just appreciation of his character and no true faith in him as Messiah. He placed himself and his service on a divine platform at once. He thus educated his disciples up to a strong living faith in him as their real king and spiritual head. He placed himself above Moses and the prophets, above the high priest and sanhedrim, above Pilate and the Cæsar, and made the relation of a disciple to him more vital, commanding, and obligatory than any other in the world. And this was then, as it is now, the only true and fit position for any person to occupy who is to live and be saved by Jesus Christ as a divine Redeemer. A man must follow Jesus as a little child; he must put away his self-dependence and worldly attachments. He must hold all his earthly relations in subordination to his relation to Christ. This is the path of faith; this the point up to which Jesus is educating every one who receives him; and by at once magnifying their relations to him as supreme, he placed discipleship on the only true ground; he put them in a condition to attain fuller faith in him and learn of him the truth respecting his person, character, and plans, and the real nature of his kingdom.

To see still further the process of training we must look at his manner of life. He did not do as the rabbis and philosophers did—gather a number of pupils in one place, and then from day to day exercise their minds on hard intellectual problems. He was a man of the people; his mission was to save souls and not to amuse or cultivate the intellect. The truth was in his life, and this life was the life of the world. He

had no fixed and permanent abode. His headquarters may have been at Capernaüm, but his life was mainly spent out among the people. He preaches the gospel all round the Sea of Galilee, in all the towns and villages of northern Palestine; he goes to Jerusalem, and discourses to the crowds collected at the great feasts; he does not disdain to visit the Samaritans and win some souls among that ruined people. He declared to one who offered to follow him: "The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his head." In all these journeys his chosen disciples accompanied him; they shared his fare; they walked and rested with him, and witnessed all his life.

(1.) Here, then, at the outset, we may say, they were brought into the closest intimacy with him and were subject to his unconscious influence; for there flows from every person an unconscious influence, the result of his spirit and life, that affects those intimate with us. This influence is often mightier in molding others than even our spoken words and prominent acts. You can not define, you can not lay hold of it and analyze it, any more than you can the influence of the breath of spring. You can only feel it. And Christ designed, by thus keeping his disciples by his side, to make them thoroughly acquainted with himself. He has no mock official dignity, which hides the native weakness from the view of men. He is open, simple, accessible, descending to their level. He is brotherly, affectionate, gentle, heavenly. They hear him pray; they see him weep. They feel the beatings of his compassionate heart. They seem to be almost conscious of the divine fullness of power and benevolence

and wisdom that flow from him. Thus they come to know him and feel his influence in the most intimate relations of life.

(2.) In connection with this you see how Christ inducts them into the true method of advancing his kingdom. His kingdom is to be set up in the hearts of the people; it is to be a salvation for all men. And Jesus does not confine himself to one class or place; he goes round from village to village, healing the sick and preaching his gospel. He does not wait for them to come to him; he carries the gospel to them. He repels no one; the publicans and the harlots are as dear to him as scribes and priests. He goes into their houses, reclines at their tables, heals their loathsome diseases, spreads beneficence and light all round them. Thus did he train his disciples to understand how the gospel is to be spread among men. And this method they afterward adopted, and the world feels their power. The church at this day has, to some extent, forgotten her Master's example. But when she shall gird herself for this work of preaching Christ persistently to the poor, then the millenium will come.

(3.) Another advantage this method afforded, was that his disciples heard all his public discourses. These were called out by various occasions, and thus they have such variety.

(4.) Then this intimacy of life enabled him to give them in private such special instructions and such explanations of his public discourses as otherwise they could not have obtained; and in these ways a vast amount of truth is given to them.

(5.) Walking thus with Jesus, they witnessed his

miracles ; they knew the occasions on which they were wrought ; they saw the divine power and love manifested in them.

(6.) Then, in addition to all this, Jesus occasionally sent them forth to preach the truths they had begun to learn. He would have them try their powers. As the eagle thrusts a fledgling from the nest, and, when its little wings fail, flies under it and bears it up and then lets it try again, so Jesus taught them, tested them, sustained them in preparation for the time when he should be taken from them.

(7.) Walking thus with him, taught thus by him, molded by his deity, brought into most intimate knowledge of his character, at length they follow him to Gethsemane, to Calvary, to Olivet, and the discipline is complete. Behold the result ! These once unlearned Jews, full of national prejudices, narrow-minded, of no account, without power, suddenly appear on the stage of action powers of light. Intellectual, fervid, bold, broad-minded ; they begin to preach a crucified and risen Savior. The attention of the world is arrested. At Jerusalem first, thousands are converted ; then, scattered by persecution, they carry the light of redemption through the realms of paganism and science, everywhere planting churches, and sowing the seed of future harvests. And thus Christ's choice and discipline of his early disciples is vindicated as divine wisdom, and, like all his words and works, proclaim him to be in truth the Son of God, the Savior of the world.

And now let us learn the lessons taught us in this rapid survey of our subject.

1. God uses one person to prepare those who may

be converted by the agency of another—parents, teachers, private Christians, ministers.

2. The whole discipline of Christ is designed to lead us to have faith in him personally.

3. The Gospel is to be applied to the poor of his Church.

4. Jesus now calls each of you to follow him.

## XVI.

## THE CALLING OF THE APOSTLES.

*“And it came to pass in those days that he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God; and when it was day he called unto him his disciples, and of them he chose twelve whom also he named apostles.”*—Luke vi: 12, 13; Mark iii: 13; Matt. x: 2.

THE choice of his apostles was one of the most important steps taken by our Savior in the establishment of his kingdom. On them his kingdom is to be built in a high sense. They are to constitute the exposition of his life, the organization of his church, the standard-bearers of his elect host; through them his church is to receive its form and life. They must be men pre-eminently fitted for this great work. Disciples he had of various characters, of different degrees of knowledge and faith. But it is not every disciple that is fitted, or that can be fitted to be an apostle. These men must be chosen from the mass after a deep insight into their capabilities and characters. Most of them had been with him for several months, perhaps for more than a year. The time had come when they must be set apart to their office and fully trained for its momentous responsibilities. Precedent to this, we get a glimpse of the inner life of Christ himself. He will not take this step without prayer. He retires alone into a mountain. It is night. The

multitudes that daily thronged his path are buried in sleep. Away from the eyes of men, he is closeted alone with God. The stars come out and look down upon him with their mild and tranquil light. All nature is hushed into repose. Jesus alone wakes; Jesus alone prays. Humanity, with all its sins, its sorrows, and its future woe, is present to his heart; the future of his church, struggling ever like himself with hostile influences; a light of love and faith, amidst storms and darkness, is in his eye. The disciples he is about to select to sustain to this church relations vital and fundamental, pass before him in their history. Their living testimony, their perils, their sorrows, their success, and their bloody end are all before him. Ah! who shall unfold either the rapture or the sorrow; the purity, the fervor, the nearness of that approach to God, when the man Christ Jesus thus held communion with the Father. The silent stars roll on, the hours fly by, and still the divine man is in heaven, breathing forth his soul in prayer. Then, as the sentinels of night retire, and the light of morn flashes on snow-crowned Hermon, and one by one the lesser hills catch the coming radiance, he comes forth with a divine light in his heart, and on his brow a spiritual radiance, to perform the duty of the hour! Oh! ye who scoff at Christianity! ye who never pray! would that ye could but look, for an instant, into the heart of this sublimest man as he communes with God. Oh! methinks that one glance, but one, would soften your stony hearts, would open to you the sad and fearful state of him who never prays.

Jesus returns to his disciples. With a thorough

knowledge of their characters and capacities, he selects twelve to be his apostles. The number chosen is not indifferent. He recognizes in this the fundamental organization of the Jewish state into twelve tribes. This number is sufficient for the object in view; a larger number could have accomplished no more. It was a convenient number for him to train and keep near his person and instruct privately. Double or thrice the number would only have embarrassed him. These were to be his private family, and hence the limitation of the number to suit the purpose. They were to be apostles—the sent—the messengers of the Lord. The term is, in two or three instances, applied to others. Paul, in his second epistle to the Corinthians, viii : 23, calls the brethren with him apostles, your messengers. In the epistle to the Philippians, ii : 25, he terms Epaphroditus your messenger or apostle. But with these exceptions the term is applied specially to denote those chosen directly by Christ himself. This is the ground on which Paul bases his claim to be an apostle. He had been supernaturally called and set apart by the Savior for his work. “Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus Christ, our Lord?” “Paul, an apostle not of men, neither by men, but by Jesus Christ.”—1 Cor. ix ; Gal. i : 1. These twelve persons then are chosen by Christ to be his apostles. A special responsibility is at once laid upon them. They may not, at first, have realized the extent of this responsibility or the full character of the work they are to perform. As yet they but imperfectly discerned the true character of their master; they saw not yet the nature of that king-

dom he was to establish, and in the establishment of which they were to be most prominent as his agents. But they feel the responsibility of a peculiar relationship to him and his work. They were chosen for some high object, and this object would unfold itself as time passed on.

What was this object. We gather it from the declarations of Christ and his apostles afterward, and from the work they actually performed. Mark states it in part, yet in substance. First, he says that they might be with him. This implies that they were to constitute his family, his special attendants, who were to care for his wants and keep him from the rude contact of the people. But it means vastly more than this. In attending Jesus they would witness all his mighty deeds, the outgoings of his benevolence in works of supernatural power. They would listen to his public discourses; they would see his spirit and manner in his interviews with all classes of the people, Pharisees and Sadducees, publicans and sinners, devout believers waiting for the consolation of Israel, and scoffing scribes waiting to catch something objectionable from his lips. His public life, his intercourse with the world, they would witness. But something more than this is contained in these words. Almost every man has two lives, or two phases of life. Before the public he is one thing; in private he is another. He has a costume for outdoors which he puts off in the house. Perfect transparency of life is exceptional in this world. Men are not generally what they seem. The same man who is the life of business and the social circle, when shut up with a few individuals for weeks becomes stupid and tiresome. How often marriage dispels the

brightness of antenuptial life! Sometimes, indeed, it reveals hidden excellencies we hardly suspected. It is a common remark that a long voyage, where a few persons are thrown together for months, gradually brings out this inner life, and it is only after this most intimate intercourse that all the aspects of a person's character and his deepest spirit are revealed. These chosen apostles were to be with Jesus for this very purpose. They are to hold the most intimate and cherished intercourse with him under all circumstances, by night and by day, as he walked and as he rested, surrounded by multitudes or retired from the world. Above all things it was essential that they should know Christ. His nature was peculiar, his character exceptional. It was not a formal creed they were to learn, but Jesus himself. Renan has well said, that Jesus "did not preach his opinions, he preached himself." He was their creed. His nature, his spotless character, his words and acts outflowing from them, were the truth and the life. Unlike any other teacher, he taught them to know himself. Other men might be worse or better than their creed. The creed might be true, the man false. But Jesus Christ in his nature and life is the sum of all Christianity. To understand this nature and appreciate this life were essential to qualify them to be his apostles. They must be with him in intimacy just as close as it was possible to be here on earth; they must breathe the atmosphere of his spirit; they must see the outflashings of his soul; they must feel the beatings of his heart; they must sit at his feet surrounded by the tempered glories of the divine nature; they must have unveiled to them the brightness of the Father's glory and the express image of his person;

they must see all round this wonderful, unique person. In such tender intimacy, amidst all the circumstances of public and private life, circumstances at times trying and fearful, if there was a defect they would see it; if there was a discord in the harmony of this divine man they would hear it; if there was anything that was not sincere, real, pure, they would know it. Here in this same tender, varied, constant communion with Jesus, was the secret of apostolic knowledge and strength. The knowledge of himself was the highest attainment they could make. You recollect how this thought is brought out at the last supper: "Philip saith unto him, Lord, show us the Father and it sufficeth us. Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father, and how sayest thou then, Show us the Father!" Was there ever on earth another being in human form that could truthfully make such an assertion and appeal? Oh! Philip, hast thou been living so long amidst this supernal brightness and yet has not thy dull spirit opened to take in the sublime fact that in this Jesus the express image of God in his infinite perfectness is revealed to thee in the only way in which the finite can see the infinite? The time came when all this was clear to the amazed disciple; when all this treasured knowledge of the life of Jesus opened itself to these apostles in all its sublime proportions, its vast significance, its perfect harmony; when, instinct with this truth and informed with this life, they preached an incarnate God, a crucified, risen, and ascended Redeemer.

Next, you will notice Mark says he ordained them, that he might send them forth to preach. To

preach is to testify, to declare the truth. Jesus shortly after this sent them forth to preach in the towns and villages of Israel. But this preaching was limited to the announcement of the fact that the Messiah had come. It was little more than a repetition of the Baptist's testimony. They could not enter into the nature and work of the Messiah. They were as yet ignorant of that nature and work. They were still in the twilight. Indeed the grand facts on which the kingdom of Christ rested were yet in the future. It was not until the cycle of these facts were complete in the death, resurrection, and ascension of our Lord, that they were able fully to understand the truth as it is in Jesus—the truth which constitutes the glorious gospel of the grace of God. Even this truth, announced to them by Jesus in words, they could not appreciate until it became a fact; they could not testify to it, though they had believed it, any more than Columbus could testify to the existence of a western continent, however strong his conviction of it, until he had set his foot upon it. But the grander facts of redemption entered slowly their minds and hearts when Jesus declared them. It was not till they had witnessed them they were prepared to testify to them. Then they stood forth *witnesses* for Christ. Then their real mission as preachers of the Gospel commenced. As witnesses of his life, his character, his teachings, his miracles, his death, his resurrection and ascension, twelve men were better than twelve hundred. Their testimony would be clearer, more definite, more conclusive. As the preaching witnesses of Christ, they declared the truth and laid the foundations of that Church which now advances to possess the world.

And this is one of the great objects for which they were chosen. To these two objects Mark adds a third : and to have power to heal diseases and cast out devils. This means that they were to be the special recipients of supernatural power to qualify them for their work. This power was given them to a limited extent during Christ's life. You remember how they returned from one of their preaching tours with joy and informed the Master of the miraculous works they had performed. But all this was only to educate them to exercise faith in Jesus as the source of this power. And sometimes, when faith was weak, their power was gone. Then they ask, "Why could not we cast him out?" and the answer is, "Oh! ye of little faith!" This was the school in which Christ was teaching them confidence in him as possessed of divine power. Step by step he was advancing them in the knowledge of himself; day by day he was laying the foundations of faith in him broader and deeper. The supernatural power he gave them was just sufficient for this object. This power is never given superfluously. A fearful responsibility goes with it, which only a strong faith can sustain. But when Christ's work was done, and all this preparatory training was finished, then there was given to them supernatural endowments of the most wonderful character. These were threefold. First came a special mental illumination, the gift of supernatural discernment, knowledge, and wisdom. You recollect how Jesus had promised them, in view of his own departure, the presence of the Paraclete, the Comforter, the Holy Ghost; how he had told them that this divine Spirit should bring all things he had taught them to their remembrance, and guide them into all

truth. Now this was one of the most remarkable promises ever uttered ; the fulfillment of it most essential to the successful establishment of the kingdom of Jesus. It is one of those parts of the life of Christ which most men pass lightly over ; but it was in itself the very force that was necessary to give form and vitality to the whole scheme in the minds of men. There is nothing in the life of Jesus that brings out his prescience and his power more luminously than this promise and its fulfillment. The inspiration of the New Testament all springs out of this promise ; the early victories of the truth are all due to it. Jesus would not have his apostles commence their ministry until they had received it. "Tarry ye in Jerusalem until ye be endued with power from on high." They were plain men, uneducated in worldly science. Their memories were treacherous ; their views of truth fragmentary and imperfect. But when this supernatural power rested on them, then the thoughts, the teachings, the works of Jesus came back to them and ranged themselves in divine order round the Savior, ministering each something to the completeness of his wisdom and the object of his life. Parables, predictions, mysterious declarations respecting himself and his kingdom, all at once stood revealed in a divine light. The wondrous scheme of redemption, so dark before, and he, its source and center, so mysterious in the paradoxical union of attributes divine and human, now are all flooded with a heavenly radiance. His birth, his life, his death, his resurrection, are enigmas no more. They are all consistent parts of the divine truth foretold in prophecy, revealed in Christ as the Savior of the world. Associated with this endowment

was the gift of utterance. This had been specially promised. Jesus had declared that he would be to them a mouth and wisdom which the adversaries could not gainsay—they were not even to consider what answer they would make when put on trial before magistrates, for he would teach them in that hour what to say. This gift of utterance is wholly distinct from the gift of knowledge. Many a man has profound science who is incapable of so presenting what he knows as to interest and impress the people. Many a lawyer is able in his office but utterly fails before a court and jury. Jefferson was an able writer, but a miserable speaker. Washington had a solid judgment, but no power in utterance. The power of speaking impressively demands a combination of qualities—the right temperament, quick susceptibilities of emotion, a creative imagination, clear perceptions of truth and of the best mode of presenting it, the gift of language, and all these held in command, like well-trained and spirited coursers, obedient to the slightest wish of the driver. And when this power is possessed in large measure and is united with a clear and profound intelligence, then its possessor wields a more than regal power, a power the highest ever given to men; then his utterances move the people, lead them on into action or knowledge, inspire new ideas, illustrate the history of nations, and live as elements of thought and influence long after he has gone from the scene. Few such men, endowed in the highest degree with these associated gifts, have lived on earth. But their names are written broadly on the history of the world.

Now, without this gift, the apostles, with all their

knowledge, would have been utterly incompetent for their work. They were to preach Christ and him crucified. They were to teach publicly thousands. They were to combine, illustrate, enforce truths novel, profound, unheard of, foreign to all science, opposed to the depravities, the philosophies, the religious habits and systems of the age. It was the pulpit, the living voice, the clear utterance, that was to infuse the ideas of the gospel into the minds of men. These men, inspired with a new spirit, filled with the divine knowledge of Jesus, gifted with an utterance fitted to the thoughts that possessed them, were to come in living contact with human souls, stand face to face with the powers of darkness, speak the truth before nobles and peasants, before philosophers and superstitious slaves, before Jews and pagans. This truth is to be uttered, not as philosophers reasoning, not diffidently, hesitatingly, blindly, but in bold, clear statements, in fervid addresses, with an intense earnestness and confidence and adaptation to these various classes befitting the great salvation. Yet this gift was not theirs by nature. They had not been trained in the schools to exercise what native talent they possessed. But when the hour for the bestowment of this special gift came, they found a new power developed within them. Tongues of sacred flame rested on them, and no orator, however gifted, however carefully trained, ever spake with such power as these fishermen of Galilee. And thus another great object of Jesus in ordaining them to be his apostles was accomplished, and they became pre-eminently preachers of his gospel.

To seal all these endowments and attest their truth, and awaken attention to their words and confirm believers, the special power to perform supernatural works directly affecting others, like the healing of diseases, was conferred upon them. All these things prepared them to be witnesses of Christ, preachers of his truth, the organizers of churches, the propagators and defenders of the faith, the foundations on which the church is built, Christ himself being the chief corner-stone.

We come now to the remaining point of our discussion, the persons chosen to be apostles. They all lived in Galilee, and most of them around and near to the sea of that name. Their education was provincial, their manners rude, their culture limited, their habits simple, their very speech defective. They were outside of the literary and religious center of the nation. Galilee was a name of reproach. They spoke the language of the time with a provincial accent. Peter is charged with being a Galilean because his speech betrayed him. The apostles were all spoken of as unlearned men. None of them had sat at the feet of Gamaliel; they had access to none of the chief sources of culture. They were neither familiar with the elaborate legal learning of the Pharisees, nor with the more secular science of the Sadducees. They were neither priests nor rabbis. They were simply plain, unlettered countrymen. Some of them, and of those most of the leading minds, were fishermen. Now sailors, the world over, are remarkable for simplicity, boldness, rudeness of speech and manners, and independence of thought and action. That miniature ocean was the school for hardy, fresh, self-denying

natures, where, outside of the schools in their solitary avocation, they nourished simple thoughts, and gained boldness and independence in conflict with the forces of nature.

And the question at once challenges an answer, why did Jesus select such men for his work, instead of some of the masters in Israel like Nicodemus? Why did he pass by the men of social and literary culture; men familiar with the whole circle of Jewish knowledge, able in speech, elevated in position, and capable of bringing to any cause they might espouse not only the force of their own high attainments, but an influence already strong in the nation? The answer to this question displays, like all the other works and words of Jesus, his profound wisdom. What was his object in the choice of his apostles? Was it to ally to himself men already filled with the forms of a system he came to overthrow? or was it not to make a new creation; to establish himself, his life, his words, his character; his thoughts in minds prepared to receive them? They were to be witnesses to facts, and those facts were largely in opposition to the whole current of the theology and science of the time. They were to be the expounders of these facts, and not of effete traditions and philosophical speculations. They were to be men of faith, and he was to be the center, the substance and the life of that faith. He could teach them more true science than all the world knew. His object was to fit them to put the science of himself into the minds of men, and in the process to nullify and put away as useless nine-tenths of what the world called science. And for this purpose he must have minds simple, fresh, receptive of truth, ready to re-

ceive, bold to avow, strong in faith, hardy in maintaining it. But these master-minds, these cultured Jews, were filled with false ideas, and these ideas impeded faith and distorted the truth he announced. They were too wise in their own conceits to come down to the simple love of a disciple of Jesus. And when faith began it was so battered and deadened by their false method of reasoning and their habits of resting on human traditions that it had only a sickly existence. These, too, were the minds that in their literary pride and exclusiveness were deficient in the humility, the boldness, the self-denial which Christ demanded of his apostles. See Nicodemus slinking round by night to converse with Jesus; see him reasoning on his natural principles about the new birth! Was such a man, with his habits and timidity, fit to be an apostle? No. It is the simple-hearted, the fresh, untainted natures in which Christ must install himself and the grand facts of his redemption. Using such agents for the establishment of his Church, he demonstrated its independence of all forces save those animated directly from himself. He took his stand outside of all existing organizations; he borrowed neither light nor power from the existing theologies and sciences; he shone himself as the true light, and he gave his apostles power to reflect this light on the world.

And just here I may say in passing that Christ's method of advancing his kingdom is quite analogous to his plan in choosing his apostles to lay the foundations of this kingdom. With rare exceptions, the men who have been most distinguished as successful ministers of Christ were early called to his service, before their habits of thought and feeling had become in-

durated and embarrassed by time. Paul is taken in his youth, when his passionate nature was receptive of new truth; when his cultured mind was susceptible of new ideas, and his whole fervid soul could take the impression of the divine image. And so all down the Church's history; the mighty reformers, preachers, the men who gave an impulse to multitudes, were early brought under the power of divine truth. These apostles themselves, with the exception of Peter, were still young, and all of them were like children under the influence and teaching of their divine Master. They were not the men to master a system of scientific theology, and Christ wrote no such system. But they were just the men to receive the full impress of the life and teachings of the Master; they were just the men to take in and attest the facts of this life; and when the gifts of divine illumination and utterance were given to them, these were better fitted than rabbis and priests and Gamaliel would have been to preach those grand facts in all their simplicity.

There is one other aspect of this subject which indicates the peculiar wisdom of the choice of these men to be apostles. There was a marked diversity of natural endowments among them. Some were passionate and impetuous, like Peter; some were profound and philosophic, like John; some had peculiar executive power, like James; and some were cautious and prone to doubt, like Philip and Thomas. Now, in a body of men who were to be the witnesses of truth and its preachers, it was of great importance that they should not be all of the same stamp; that different natures should receive the impress of Christ, and thus reflect the different aspects of his character and life.

One was the complement of another, and the whole together formed a perfect representation of humanity in its divine aspects. When such men testified, as they had seen and heard Jesus, their testimony is the strongest, the most complete conceivable. And here, too, we see the wonderful wisdom of the Master in selecting just such men to be the foundation of his Church. One there was, indeed, one whose dark character brightens all the rest; one of whom I must speak more at length hereafter; one, too, whose remorseful testimony, wrung from his tortured soul, stands out as a witness for the immaculate purity of the Son of God.

And now, leaving this course of thought, look at the wonderful contrast exhibited by these men before the crucifixion and after the ascension. How weak and blind they are; how slow to take in the sublime teachings of the Master; with what difficulty faith rises to lay hold of his promises and predictions; how they doubt and tremble at the prospect of his departure; how dim is that kingdom he declares is to come; how Peter, the stoutest heart of them all, can deny him in the Hall of Caiaphas. But look a little further. The day of Pentecost has come. Who is that facing thousands; charging home the guilt of having crucified the Christ of God; preaching salvation through his blood to convicted souls? The same Peter who, a few days ago, denied his God, with coward lips. Now the night and the twilight are gone; now the life, the words of Jesus assume their true position and glory; the kingdom has come. Henceforth they preach, they pray as in his presence; they move fearless amidst all earthly perils. Faith is triumphant, love is triumphant; the world hears their voice and feels a new

life breathed into its dead soul. Churches rise east, west, north, and south; for Christ is risen, and Christ is in them the hope of glory. Last Sabbath we celebrated the crucifixion; to-day millions rejoice in the resurrection. Christianity founded by these apostles, under the guidance and inspiration of their divine Redeemer, still lives. It has encountered fierce antagonists; it has passed through fearful corruptions; it has borne the burden of many a pagan superstition laid on it by false friends to crush out its life. It lives still; it has come forth refined and pure and mighty from all its conflicts. The burning bush is not consumed. The word of God is the same light, and Jesus is the same mighty Redeemer. Who are you that think the scoffer's *aha!* *aha!* the skeptic's sneer, the traitor's kiss, the monarch's scepter, the sciolist's science, shall avail to brand these apostles as imposters and discrown the Messiah of God? As well stay the rushing current of the Mississippi, as well freeze the sun in its orbit and darken its light forever. The power that chose and trained and endowed these apostles is mighty still. The days of Pentecost will yet be renewed; yea, even now, thousands in our own and other lands are crying—What shall we do to be saved? Here in this house some of you are trembling under the burden and beginning to ask for Jesus of Calvary. It is time you trifled no longer with a divine Redeemer; it is time you began to realize that you have an immortal soul to be damned or to be saved; it is time you knew how terrible a life of unbelief is in the dark, swift approaching future; it is time you ceased to halt between two opinions; it is time you began to think of the wrath as well as of the mercy of the Lamb, of the

justice as well as the mercy of God. It is time you listened to that voice which doomed Capernaum and Bethsaida to a deeper hell than Sodom and Gomorrah. It is time you understood that your prayerless respectability and morality and intelligence are preparing you for a deeper plunge into perdition. It is time you understood that man's chief end is to obey God and enjoy *him* forever. It is time you renounced this world as your portion, and as a penitent sinner opened your heart to Christ as your only and all-sufficient Savior. Here I leave you. A power mightier than mine must bring you into the kingdom or you are lost forever.

## XVII.

## THE APOSTLES (NO. 2).

*“Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and of the household of God: and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone.”*—Ephesians ii: 19–20; Matthew xviii: 18; John xx: 23; Rev. xxi: 14; Luke xi: 52; 1 Pet. ii: 5, 6.

THE object of these discussions on the “Life of Christ” has been to unfold his real character, life, and work; to show historically just what he was, and in the light of facts evince the superhuman, the divine character of Christianity as a system of salvation. My object has not been controversial. Limiting myself to facts admitted by all who accept the Bible as a fully inspired revelation, whether they belong to the Greek, the Roman, or the Protestant Church, I endeavor to show how these facts justify the faith of all Christians in the divine wisdom and power of Jesus as the Redeemer of men. The facts themselves are clear, and must be accepted by all who claim to be Christians. The deductions which I make from these facts, every man exercising the true liberty of a rational being must judge of whether or not they are just. Early in the life of Christ we came upon his choice of disciples; a little later we find him selecting twelve apostles. And as I have discoursed to you on both these topics,

it seems to me best to finish what I have to say on these, and then return directly to the history of the Savior. The position and work of the apostles enters largely into the wisdom of Christ in the establishment of his church and connects itself with his whole life. In my last discourse I spoke more particularly of the object of Christ in calling the twelve apostles. I propose in this to show you their true position in relation to the future church. In doing this, it will be no disadvantage to us to restate some things I then said.

The apostle Paul states, in the text, the general position of the apostles. Ye are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone. Here you will notice three things: (1.) Christ is the chief. He is the true, ultimate foundation. He is the primary authority, the inspiring and vital power of Christianity. He is the Son in his own house; Moses, one of these prophets, is a servant. He is the true builder; apostles are his workmen. He is the vine; apostles, like all Christians, are only branches. He is the beginner and finisher of faith. They only exercise faith in him. (2.) The apostle connects the prophets with the apostles. He does not join the priests with them, but the prophets. He teaches these converted Ephesians that the church in the past and present is one; that Jesus is vitally related to it in all its history; that it has not grown up suddenly in that age, but that its roots strike down far back in the past. And (3.) He says of both prophets and apostles that they constitute the *foundation* on which all Christians are built. Now we know well what the prophets did and what they were empowered to do; we know how they stood as witnesses for God; how

they proclaimed the truth ; how they prophesied of Christ ; how they settled the constitution of the Jewish church ; how they wrought miracles in attestation of their message ; how they kept alive the true faith in the midst of the wild sea of idolatry that perpetually threatened to submerge the people of God. And in this way, as the repositories and preachers of divine truth, especially in connection with a coming Messiah, they laid the foundations of religion. But what power did the apostles possess and what work did Jesus inspire them to do, that they should hold to the church the fundamental relation of its foundation ?

I. The apostles were the confessing witnesses of the life, teachings, work, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This was unquestionably the primary and essential characteristic of their office. The apostles themselves so understood it, and have left their opinion on record. Shortly after the resurrection, Peter, after stating the defection and death of Judas, says, " Wherefore of these men which have companied with us *all the time* that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection." Here it is stated as explicitly as language can do it, that these apostles were to be confessing witnesses of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. The person to be chosen must be one who had companied with them all the time from the baptism of John. He must be personally cognizant of all the chief facts of Christ's life, and of his resurrection and ascension as the final seal of the whole. The language is minute and comprehensive. He must have companied with them *all*

*the time* of Christ's going in and out among them, from the baptism to the resurrection, for the express purpose of being able to give a *personal testimony* to the whole life of Christ. The resurrection is directly mentioned, because in that the work of redemption culminated, and the divine mission of Jesus was conclusively attested by God himself. Now the importance of the apostolic office in this respect can not be overrated. It is fundamental. If you take away the apostles as the confessing witnesses of Christ, you destroy the very foundations of Christianity. Christianity is, objectively, a series of historical facts. In distinction from the older dispensations, these facts are all embraced in the life of Christ. These facts must be made known to the world and attested precisely as any other facts, that is by human testimony. It is not a system of human creation. It is not the product of human beings. It is not a series of poetic imaginations; it is not wrought out by profound reasoning, like the philosophy of Plato. It does not swing in the air. It has its roots somewhere; it has its basis and anchorage somewhere. It professes to be a simple narrative of one life; it consists of a series of facts in connection with this life, the most remarkable, the most affecting, and the most universal and important in their relations to human destiny in all history. These are and must be attested to the world by human testimony. There is no other way in which they could be made known to and become obligatory on the faith of all men, unless God should make a special revelation to every individual. Every argument in proof of the divine mission of Christ or the truth of Christianity presupposes the facts as attested by these apostles.

The argument from the immense vitality, the amazing progress of Christianity in the face of the deepest corruptions and most powerful opposition of our fallen humanity only prepares you to appreciate the facts attested by these apostles. The argument, from the nature of the scriptures themselves, their intrinsic purity, their sublime views of God, their adaptation to meet the deepest wants of our minds and hearts in reference to our salvation, prepares you to ask the question: Whence came all this; and then you are conducted back to this life of Jesus as testified to and unfolded by these apostles. The lawyer who studied the moral law was compelled to ask: Where did Moses get this? And the answer came with the force of demonstration from Moses himself as the witness: "From God." If you saw only the top of a tree flourishing in beauty, you would be sure it had a trunk and roots below it. And if some one should tell you, "Oh! that is all in your imagination;" you would examine it and find trunk and roots. So, from whatever point you approach Christianity, you are conducted back to these apostles as the personal confessing witnesses of the life of Christ, and on their testimony your faith must rest.

And if this is true now that Christianity has a history and has accumulated around itself so many independent collateral evidences of its divine origin, much more was it true when it commenced. Then all was new, strange, hostile. Then, for the first time, the facts were declared; then these apostles stood forth as personal witnesses of that which they affirmed. There was no peradventure, no fancy, no may be, about it. They spake what they knew; they testified

to what they had seen. They had been with Jesus; they saw his miracles; they heard his discourses; they saw him on the cross; they saw him after his resurrection; they witnessed his ascent to heaven; they were the living, personal witnesses of these facts; they were prepared to stand by them in the face of all perils; they did stand by them amidst persecutions and tortures, until most of them won a martyr's crown.

Here I wish you to notice a broad distinction between the attestation of facts and the attestation of opinions. Men have died all the world over for their opinions, and opinions of the most opposite character. The records of the inquisition alone will show you thousands of Turks, Jews, and Christians put to death for their opinions. Their willingness to die for their faith proved the sincerity and depth of their convictions, not the truth of their opinions. But when a man says he saw certain things, and that he personally witnessed certain facts; when he maintains this testimony in the face of loss and persecution, and against all the ordinary motives that influence men; when, in short, he will die rather than deny them, then you have the highest attainable human testimony that these facts are true, or that he is thoroughly convinced that they are true. That these apostles could have invented this life of Christ, and all his wondrous teachings, is utterly incredible on the face of it; and that they should have conspired to impose upon the world as facts a series of falsehoods, right in Jerusalem itself, and maintain their imposition in the face of terrible persecution, and the loss of life itself, is a proposition it would seem hardly pos-

sible for the most credulous fool sin ever debauched to admit for an instant. These apostles stood forth as confessing witnesses of what they had seen and known. On their personal testimony thousands then believed. On that personal witnessing for Christ millions believed in him. And thus an apostle could say of the Ephesian Christians, and of all others, "Ye are built on the foundation of the apostles, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone."

2. The apostles were empowered to declare the conditions of salvation, or the relations of Christ to men in respect to the forgiveness of sin. This power is expressly given to them. John records the words of Christ in the 20th chapter of his Gospel: "And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them: receive ye the Holy Ghost; whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them, and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained."

Some have supposed that these words conferred on them a personal power to forgive sins, such as Christ himself possessed. But this is simply impossible. God only can forgive sins. Christ, only as divine, exercised this prerogative. This power in exercise supposes another divine power—that of infallibly discerning the real state of the heart. Jesus, as divine, possessed these attributes, and therefore he could say, "Son, daughter, thy sins are forgiven thee." But the apostles never assumed this prerogative. They could not see the heart, as their conduct proved. There is not an instance on record where they assumed to do this. They refer everything to Jesus, and never assume to act independently of him. The power given to them is broader, and has relation to the whole

Church they were to establish. It was of infinitely more importance to the world that the conditions on which sin might be pardoned should be known than that a dozen individuals should have the personal power to forgive sins. The one is broad and universal; the other is contracted and narrow. The first corresponds with the genius of Christianity, which is a religion for all men; the other is even more limited than the old system of Moses. These apostles were specially empowered to declare the conditions of salvation—to unfold the relation of the life and death of Christ to the forgiveness of sins. They had the key that unlocked the gates of the kingdom of heaven. They stood between Jesus and the world, as the divinely authorized medium through whom He and his truth are to be made known to men. He is the way, the truth, and the life. They are appointed to open that way, unfold that truth, declare that life, so that all men might walk in it, embrace it, enjoy it. Jesus himself, so far as we know, never left a single written line. All that the world knows of him and his salvation comes through them. The truth that is the power and the wisdom of God unto salvation they declared. The whole scheme of redemption, the forgiveness of sins, the conditions of repentance and faith, the relation of Christ to those who believe on him, in short, the whole Gospel, in all its converting, comforting, sanctifying, and saving power, is given to us by these witnessing apostles. Without them Jesus would be unknown to us; his life a secret drama, his death a tragedy without significance; his resurrection a story with no historic foundation, connections or meaning to justify it to the faith of the world. When, then, the resurrec-

tion had taken place and Jesus had ascended, they began at once this ministry of the forgiveness of sin. They declared the holy character and life of Jesus, the nature of his death and resurrection, the guilt of man. And, when convicted of sin, the multitude inquired what they should do to obtain the remission of sin, they did not say, come to us apostles and we will individually pardon you—but, repent, and believe on the Lord Jesus, and you shall be saved. And thus in all their ministry and their writings they taught the world the method of forgiveness; they showed them Christ as the only and all-sufficient Redeemer; they opened to them the mystery of the cross; they declared to them this divine man living and dying and rising to fulfill the law in all its claims and all its penalties in their stead; they unfolded to them the truth that without the shedding of blood there was no remission, and that Christ had shed his blood that God might be just and yet justify those who believe in him. This was the way in which, as Christ's chosen apostles, they pronounced man's sins forgiven or unforgiven. And this ministry of theirs has given us the gospel; the truths they taught under the inspiration of Christ's spirit are to-day the only chart of salvation for the world. He who receives them now into his heart is forgiven; he who rejects them rejects Jesus, and is lost forever. And thus, as they gave to the world the knowledge of salvation by Jesus, it is fitly said of us and all believers that we are built on the foundation of the apostles, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone.

3. Let us now advance to a third point, peculiar to

the apostolic office. The apostles were empowered to declare the fundamental principles and rules, in harmony with which the Church is to be constituted. This power is given explicitly to all the apostles in the 18th chapter of Matthew and the 18th verse: "Verily I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." In the context the subject of discipline is mentioned. There is no vital difference of opinion among Protestants or Papists or Greeks as to the general meaning of this passage, whatever there may be as to its special applications in the inferences drawn from it. The power is given in general terms, and the full meaning is explained by the acts of the apostles themselves. When a person is converted and his sins are forgiven through faith in Christ, he is from that moment a member of Christ's spiritual kingdom and an heir of heaven. But he is yet imperfect. He is in a world of sense, surrounded by adverse influences, and in direct opposition to the moving influences that are working around him. Jesus did not mean that his people should stand thus isolated, without union, without the comfort and the power that springs from the association of kindred minds. He designed they should associate together in churches, and to this end that they should have common worship and common ordinances. But in order to this they must have some common rules of action, definite relations to each other, and adopt similar principles in reference to the world without; they must have officers of certain kinds to conduct their worship and celebrate the ordinances and enforce discipline; they

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must be able to act together in all ways suitable to their own growth in Christian knowledge, the education of their children, and the spread of the gospel in the world. Now these lay at the foundation of the progress of the church. These things were absolutely essential to the edification of the believers. And the apostles were specially empowered to do these things. They gathered the isolated believers into individual bodies, or directed them so to unite. They establish the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's supper. They direct each church to appoint elders and deacons. They give rules for the conduct of their officers. They declare who ought to be admitted to the church and what class of persons should be excluded. They prompt them to send out evangelists as missionaries to preach the gospel where it had not been heard. They take infinite pains to instruct these members of the church in their duties to each other and to the world. They visit them in order to enlighten their minds and correct their errors of doctrine and practice. They write epistles that are full of divine wisdom on all these subjects. They thus covered the whole ground of duty and faith in these relations of Christians one to another and to the world. And while they left the churches free to act in many things according to the necessities of their position, yet in all things fundamental to the constitution and action of a Christian church, in all things essential to a pure and holy life, they have left to us instructions full, clear, and sufficiently definite. Thus they have done just what Christ empowered them ; what they declared to be binding, is binding on us to-day ; what they left free, we are free to do or not, as circumstances may

render expedient. For us, as Christians and as churches, the authority of these apostolic utterances is paramount. We allow no traditions, no utterances of uninspired men, however excellent, to take their place. We are built on the foundations of prophets and apostles, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone. When we abandon this position, we surrender the right of private judgment, we put away from us the freedom wherewith Christ has made us free, and the end must inevitably be the transfer of all authority over conscience from Christ, speaking through his apostles, to an ecclesiastical despotism as corrupt, as domineering, as selfish, as it is frail and fallible.

A fourth qualification for the apostolic office was the possession of the supernatural and superhuman power of working miracles. This power was given to them when they were first chosen, in a limited degree; but at the day of Pentecost it was granted in larger measure. It was held by them not as an independent power, but in connection with their whole ministry and in constant dependence on Christ. When Peter healed the lame, impotent man in the temple, he said to the people: "Ye men of Israel, why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk?" Then, after preaching Christ to them, and his resurrection, of which they were witnesses, he adds: "His name, through faith in his name, hath made this man strong." And in another case he says: "Eneas, Jesus Christ maketh thee whole." This power attended them in order to attest their authority as the true witnesses of Jesus Christ. It was God's seal to their

apostolic mission. It authorized them, in the view of men, to fulfill their mission in the establishment of the new kingdom of Jesus.

5. There was one other power given them from time to time in answer to prayer. It was the power of bestowing the special influences of the Holy Ghost. When many had been converted by the preaching of Philip in Samaria, the apostles sent to them Peter and John, who, when they were come, prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Ghost; then laid their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost. Thus did the disciples receive gifts of power. They came into the possession of the gift of tongues, of prophecy, of healing; and they in turn went forth everywhere preaching the gospel and attesting its truth by mighty works. Wherever these apostles went as confessing witnesses for Jesus, they were attended by these divine attestations of Christ's power and presence. Thus the word of God grew mightily and prevailed. Thus, amidst a blaze of light and power, the Christian church was established; its fundamental statutes enacted and adopted; its solid foundations were laid in and through these living servants of the Lord. Multitudes, repenting of sin, believed in Jesus, and walked heavenward, sustained by their faith in a risen Redeemer.

If now I have stated correctly the chief characteristics of the apostolic office—and I know of no Christian Church that will not accept this as a true statement—then it settles the question whether or not the apostles left behind them official successors. If they were the personal confessing witnesses of Christ's resurrection, and so of his life, person, and character;

if they were to declare the relation of Christ to the salvation of men ; the conditions of forgiveness and acceptance with God ; if they were to constitute the Church, prescribing its laws and rules of life ; if to perform this they possessed special endowments of the Holy Ghost, and, to attest their authority, were empowered to work miracles ; then it is impossible they should have official successors, as well as totally unnecessary. It was impossible, since only they who had seen Christ after his resurrection could bear witness to it. Paul, who speaks of himself as an exceptional case—one born out of due time—bases his claims to the apostleship not only on his miraculous call and his special endowment of gifts by the Holy Ghost, but also upon the fact that he had personally seen Christ. It was unnecessary, since they were appointed to be the foundations of the Church, and they did their work, fulfilled their office, and now the work to be done is not to lay over again the foundation, but to build upon it living stones, a spiritual temple of holiness and light.

Moreover, there is not a particle of evidence that they ever appointed a person or persons to succeed them in their office. The only appointment ever made was of one to succeed Judas in order to fill up the original number. And even then the choice of Matthias was determined by lot, and not by the apostles themselves. Nor is there a single line or intimation in all the scriptures that it was the divine purpose that they should have official successors. From the beginning to the end of the sacred record they stand alone as the personal witnesses of Jesus, on whom the Church is built. The only succession possible is that of simple

ministers of Jesus, preachers of his Gospel, elders of his Church. In this sense every pastor, every elder who is true to his office, the world over, is their successor; just as every humble Christian man and woman is the successor of Dorcas and Priscilla and Aquila. This is the ground taken almost universally by the Protestant Church at the Reformation, and which Archbishop Whately and Dr. Alford, Dean of Canterbury, have more recently so well established. The apostles appear before us at the commencement of the Christian Church the authoritative witnesses of Jesus, sealing their testimony to the great facts of Christianity in their blood. For any man to claim equality or participation with them in their official character is as presumptuous as it would be for a lark to claim to be an eagle.

Among the apostles there were two whose characters and works claim special attention. These were Peter and John. I propose before closing to speak a few moments of the character and position of the first of these. Peter's natural qualities fitted him in some respects for pre-eminence among his associates. Nurtured on the sea of Tiberias, he was bold and energetic. Of great simplicity of character, he was destitute of art and policy. What he believed he held to with unflinching tenacity and avowed with equal directness. He moved directly to his object, without considering the best means of attaining it. His perceptions were quick and his zeal intense. His decision and promptness gave great force to his character. He was ready in utterance; he anticipated others in action. He had neither the philosophic power of thought possessed by John nor the clear, profound logic of Paul; but he

had those qualities which at first make a deeper impression and create influence—vast energy, unconquerable will, a soul possessed by a few great ideas, fiery zeal, and perfect singleness of purpose. But these very qualities were associated with defects that sprang out of them. His boldness sometimes degenerated into presumption, and drew on him the severest rebuke Jesus ever administered to a disciple, “Get thee behind me, Satan; thou savorest not the things that be of God, but of man.” His self-confidence betrayed him into sin, and led the way to the denial of his Lord in the hall of Caiaphas. Yet even here [the instant repentance of the man evinces his utter sincerity and real faith. His quickness in action sometimes led him to act inconsiderately, as in cutting off the ear of the servant; while his conduct on one occasion exposed him to the just censure of Paul. He was the third of the disciples called by Jesus. There are various indications of the prominence given to him by Jesus and the apostles. We find him one of the three chosen to witness the raising of the daughter of Jarius; one of the three who witnessed the transfiguration; and one of the three who witnessed the agony in the garden. He is frequently addressed by Christ as representing the apostles, and he frequently speaks in their name. On one occasion, when the apostles had returned from their first missionary tour, and Jesus questions them as to their views of him, Peter, as their representative, answers, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.” It was on this occasion, and partly with reference to the depth of his own personal conviction in making for himself and the others this confession, that Jesus uttered those remarkable words: “Blessed art

thou Simon Bar-Jona, for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven." Here, Peter appears as the representative of the apostles—a confessing witness of the Messiahship of Jesus. This was the uniform interpretation of the early church. He, in common with them, was to constitute the foundation on which the church is to be built. Nor need we deny that in this work he was to bear a specially prominent part. This whole promise was fulfilled when, on the day of Pentecost, he first proclaimed the gospel of his risen Lord; it was still further fulfilled when he was chosen to open the kingdom of heaven to the Gentiles and admit the centurion Cornelius to its hopes and pardons. But that Peter had any proper official supremacy over the apostles, the early church denied; and the whole record shows that he neither claimed nor exercised any such supremacy. For (1) the same promise of power which is here addressed to him was subsequently addressed to all the apostles. (2.) There is no admission or intimation of any such official supremacy to be found in the sacred writings. (3.) When anything of special importance is to be done, it is not Peter, but the apostles, that do it. (4.) When the judgment of the synod, assembled to determine certain questions touching the Gentiles, is to be given,

we find it is James, not Peter, who announces it. (5.) Precisely the same powers, endowments, and duties are given to and imposed upon all the apostles. (6.) And, finally, neither Matthew, nor John, nor James, nor Paul, nor Peter himself, ever allude to such an idea. Paul, on the contrary, expressly declares that he was not inferior to the chiefest of the apostles.

But if we should suppose it to be true that Peter was invested with some kind of official supremacy, of what value would that be to the church unless it could be shown that he was empowered to appoint a successor, and the world should be informed who that successor was, and that Jesus designed this succession should be perpetual? Yet on all these points there is not a word of proof in Scripture. The idea itself did not originate until centuries after Peter had gone home to his rest. God's people for hundreds of years knew nothing of it; and when it did arise, the whole Eastern Church refused to admit it, and have done so ever since. It was the product of the same ambition that had made Rome the capital of the world, and which thence sought to make it the source of a higher and broader authority than Rome ever knew. Legitimately the prince who rules on the seven hills is the successor of Cæsar, but in no just sense of Peter. Nay, the idea itself is false and inconsistent with the genius of Christianity. The unity of the church is in its spirit, its doctrines, and its holy lives, not in an outward form or a visible head. Everywhere through the New Testament, Jesus Christ is the sole head of his kingdom. He has no vicegerent on earth. It is to him alone every knee shall bow; it is to him alone

every tongue shall confess that he is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Paul, Peter, James, John, perpetually sink themselves, while they evermore exalt Christ. Peter himself rebukes the self-confidence and pride which would exalt the individual, and exhorts the elders, putting himself on their level as an elder, not to act as lords over God's heritage. Jesus is the only head of the body, the church, and to him all must look as the source of all light, all pardon, all salvation.

These apostles, thus chosen and trained and endowed for their special work, evince the profound wisdom of Jesus. His great work could not be finished until it had been attested by his resurrection from the dead. Then these disciples stood forth as confessing witnesses of his life, death, and resurrection. Supernaturally endowed, they proclaimed the great truths of redemption. They were scattered abroad; but everywhere they preached the same gospel. Paul was added to them for a special purpose. But from them all the same light, the same grace, the same power proceeds. Between them and the individual pastors and writers of the ages following, there is an amazing difference. Compared with the writings of the apostles, the compositions of the early Christian fathers are as the productions of children. They stood alone. They opened to us the knowledge of Christ, the gates of the kingdom of heaven. Here is the book they wrote, and the world is full of the work they did. These once unlettered fishermen and tax-gatherers, in connection with that young student of Gamaliel, laid the foundations of Christ's kingdom under the direct inspiration of his spirit. John saw

in vision the wall of the holy city, and it had twelve foundations, and in each foundation was the name of an apostle. We praise God for the work they did; we honor them as our teachers in Christ, but we exalt Christ above them all as the Prince of our and their salvation. For us they lived, they preached, they wrote, they suffered, and on them hath Christ built his church. Their work is finished; their crowns are won; all that Jesus promised to do through them has been done. And now it is for us to build on these foundations of apostles and prophets, and be ourselves living stones in this glorious temple. Let us see to it we seek to put in there no wood, hay, stubble, to be burnt out at last. Let us build in only the precious stones—souls full of faith and love, of zeal and self-sacrifice. Then shall we meet these servants of our Lord with joy, and together rejoice in Jesus as the chief and head of all.

## XVIII.

HIS TEACHINGS. (NO. 1). HIS CHARACTER AS A TEACHER  
OR PROPHET.

*“Never man spake like this man.”—John vii : 46.*

THIS was the answer of the officers sent by the chief priests and Pharisees to arrest Jesus. There must have been something wonderful in the appearance and speech of Jesus, when officers of the law were thus disarmed and powerless in his presence. But in the words themselves there was a living power that ever since has moved the hearts of men. As we are about to consider the *teachings* of Jesus, permit me in this discourse to remark of him as a *teacher*—the teacher of the world.

There were some things about the Savior which, to those who saw and heard him, made his teaching peculiarly impressive. 1. Jesus in his personal appearance must have been singularly attractive; we have no account of this, if we except the letter of Lentulus. The apostles were too intent on the grand thoughts he uttered, and the works he performed, to record for us that personal appearance, which at the best was transitory. Yet we are sure that a noble manhood expressed itself in a perfect physical form; that as Jesus harmonized in himself the forces of nature and grace, so he must have possessed the perfection of manly grace and beauty. There was no distortion

nor imperfection of form or feature, but that nameless proportion which constituted him the finest physical type of man. You know also how the intellectual activities and the inward dispositions of men, when long indulged, give a peculiar cast to the countenance; photograph themselves upon it. You remember the story of the painter who portrayed upon his canvass a child of great natural beauty, and years afterwards a man whose countenance expressed all the base passions of the soul in their horrible deformity. He hung them side by side—innocence contrasted with vice. And you remember how it came out that the child had grown into that man. So avarice early begun and long continued; so vice in all its forms, impresses itself unmistakably upon the countenance. And, on the other side, how amiability, kindness, love, give a peculiar sweetness to the countenance; how consciousness of power puts its impress upon us; how devotion to great and noble pursuits reveals itself, and how the face takes on thus the hue and color and character of the soul. Jesus could have been no exception to this law. His matchless purity; his inborn love; his conscious nobility of nature and purpose; his great work of redemption; his spirit of prayer and holy communion with the Father—these gave a sublime attractiveness, of beauty, power, and love to his countenance above that of *every* other man. This *we* see not. They saw it, felt it, knew it.

2. And then there is the eloquence of Jesus; for there is an eloquence of words—words that even when read in your closet rouse and thrill through your soul; and there is an eloquence of voice which, in its varied intonations and expressions, acting upon the nervous

system, kindles or calms, stirs and moves men. Whitfield would often pronounce the word eternity in such a manner that it seemed like the voice of the archangel summoning the world to judgment, and thousands who heard it remembered it to their last day. And Jesus unquestionably spake thus as never man spake, and they who did but listen to that wonderful voice never forgot it. We have in part his living words; they lighten, move, and bless our souls; but the living voice that thrilled alike friends and foes we shall hear not till we pass up to his presence chamber. But leaving these accessory elements of his power as a teacher, let us dwell on those which reveal themselves in his recorded life.

1. One of the first things that impresses you in his teachings is the *authority* with which he utters them. God, in speaking from Sinai, says, "I am the Lord thy God; thou shalt have no other gods before me." This is the grandest height of authority. Listen to Jesus. It is the same voice; the circumstances only are altered. He is the divine teacher of the world. He never modifies, qualifies, as if apologizing for imperfections. His words go forth as perfect, direct and finished as a flash of lightning right from the bosom of God. This man speaks with an authority above Scribes and Pharisees, above all other men. His voice is the voice of God; his words are universal commands, or promises, or threatenings, or principles for the world's salvation. He is a king—yea, the king of kings in his authoritative utterances.

2. Notice his profound originality. He copies no one, neither in manner, style, nor method. You can not compare him with any teacher in history. Even

the richest prophets of the Old Testament take off their crowns and their golden vestments, and lay them at his feet; for they were but the reflection of his rays, while he is the full-orbed sun. True originality in thought is the rarest of all rare things among men. We grow up in a certain atmosphere of thought; we receive suggestions, ideas, opinions, from parents, teachers, books, society, nature. Most men are like a door swinging backward and forward on its hinges in a given track and on a limited scale, while the most original thinkers are only cisterns receiving and reproducing the rain that has fallen from the clouds. Jesus Christ is the only specimen of a true originality in all history. He is the self-fed, the self-creating fountain of all thought. Ideas of infinite value break forth from his mind in streams of original light. This we shall see illustrated in a hundred ways as we advance. Take now simply two specimens of this fact. Look at his conception of the kingdom of God. God is the king; himself, the atoning mediator; the divine Spirit, the regenerator; truth, the instrument; souls renewed, pardoned, consecrated to a living divine service and sustained by his power, their bodies to be raised from the grave, and all to be gathered at last into one heavenly kingdom forever. See this grand scheme! How consistent in all its parts! How unique in design! How remarkable in its development! Where do you find anything like it in all the past? If you say its elements are in the Old Testament, we answer, Jesus himself placed them there. But admitting this, yet here is the scheme in its fullness, its reality, its majesty, stripped of all types and figures, un-

folded in its sublime richness and greatness, and made a living force in the world.

Then see how even the old becomes new, and the obscure becomes clear, in the mind of this great original. He takes the truth right out of its earthly associations and reveals it in its naked simplicity. The old, battered coin, on which the superscription is almost illegible, he recoins, stamps it with his own image, sends it forth bright from the mint to be the spiritual currency of the world for all time. What a body of fresh, living, operative truth he has issued for the guidance of man evermore! Ah! look which way you will over the past and the present, take in your view the greatest, most original, most profound thinkers of the world, put them beside him, and your verdict will be the same with that of the ages, never man spake like this man.

3. Another characteristic of Christ as a teacher is his radicalness. This term is so used and abused in politics that I must define it. A radical in politics is often stigmatized by one side as a destructive—a man reckless of constitutions and time-honored usages. A conservative is as often stigmatized, on the other side, as a conservator of abuses, of shams and frauds. But the true radical seeks only to reform abuses and do away with effete or mischievous laws. The true conservative seeks only to conserve what is really good in the past. The one has his face forward toward progress; the other has his face backward toward the real and the true already gained. In this sense a man may be both, and both ideas may be necessary and both sorts of people essential in an imperfect condition to make reform just and secure real progress.

The Pharisees and priests were examples of the conservative in the bad sense; Theudas and the false Christs of the radical in the same sense. But Jesus Christ unites in himself the best meaning of the two. Yet in viewing him as a teacher, in reference to that time and the world at large, the radicalness of his character comes chiefly before us. For (1) he penetrates right down to the spirit and heart of what was right and true in the old system; he goes down to the pregnant germs of truth and takes off the incumbent mass of traditional observances that had prevented their full development. If the law said, thou shalt not kill; he says, if you hate, you are guilty of murder. If the law said, thou shalt not commit adultery; he says, if you look at a woman to lust after her, you commit adultery. If the law said, thou shalt have no other God before me; he says, if a man love father or mother, wife or children, or his own life more than me, he is not worthy of me. Everywhere he penetrates to the vital spirit of religion, and stripping off the glosses and coverings and superstitions of men, he brings the hearts of men right into the presence of God himself. (2.) Nor is this all; for he came with the express design of putting an end to the whole Mosaic system—of laying it aside as a worn-out garment that had served its purpose and its time. The priesthood—the hierarchy—the sacrifices, the ritual, the feasts, the entire national system, he put away forever. In this respect he was apparently the most radical and destructive reformer that ever lived. (3.) But then all this was in order to the introduction of the true kingdom of God. If he put away the priest, it was because henceforth he was the only priest of

the new church; if he put away the sacrifice, it was to substitute his own death as the true, original Lamb of God; if he abolished the temple, it was because he as the medium of mercy had his seat in the heavens and the world were to look no longer to a sacred place on earth, but to him in the heavens. If he put away their ritual and forms of prayer, and various observances, it was that religion, in the freedom of the spirit and the truth, might go forth untrammelled, and men might be taught to worship God, not in forms of prayer, but in the spontaneous upliftings of the heart—worshipping God in spirit and in truth—and in doing this, while he brought the old to an end, as having fulfilled its purpose, he introduced the most radical and aggressive of all systems. A system of thinking, and feeling, and action, that was adapted not only to reform the Jew, but to put away from the earth all other forms of religion and bear aggressively upon the world-spirit, and world-customs, and world-excesses of life and amusement, and time-wasting, everywhere and for all time. So that to-day it is just as aggressive, just as reformatory, just as intent on uprooting sin in the heart and sin in the life, as when he promulgated it. Here, to-night, if a man will love this world, the love of the Father is not in him; if he will not renounce all that is sinful, he hath no part in the salvation of Jesus. And so here, again, in the thorough radicalness of his teaching, we say, "Never man spake like this man."

4. Another characteristic of Christ's teachings is their unrivalled richness. His sentences are condensed expressions of living, germanent truths. There is a wonderful affluence of meaning in them; they are the seed of infinite harvests; they break forth on every

side in exhaustless thought. No teacher ever has begun to approach him in this condensed fullness and life-producing energy of his teachings. His sentences are volumes; his paragraphs are often long prophecies. His principles, stated in a few words, are living truths that take possession of humanity, and move as powers of light through all after history. Take any one of them at random—"And I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me." There is the divinity, the atonement, the life-giving energy, that are the elemental powers of the church of Jesus. "Ye are the light of the world." Wonderful! Obscure, unlearned, despised disciples; ye are to radiate me and my gospel through all coming ages! And so in scores and hundreds of passages, you find these thoughts pregnant with a world of meaning. Nor are they dreamy speculations; abstractions glittering in the air, without relations or productive influence on society. They are connected with the life, the character, the success of the church; they are all of life there is in the world. We begin to think out any one of them; it runs out in all directions and opens an amazing field of thought in the church and the world—in the past, present, and future. The more we seek to enter into and compass and gather up the richness of these living teachings, the more we are compelled to say, "Never man spake like this man."

5. See, now, how as a teacher he adapts himself to times, places, and persons. There is a wonderful variety in his manner, and in the spirit of his discourse. He has an exquisite sense of the true proprieties of life. There is in his conduct manifest a delicate perception of fitness, adaptation, and harmony. He ad-

dresses the multitude in one strain; the Scribes and Pharisees in another, his disciples privately in another. At times, too, there is great gentleness, at times severity, and at times a repression of the impulse to speak, which is more eloquent than words. The apostle Paul besought Christians by the *gentleness* of Christ! And you find this loving tenderness manifested again and again in his life. What a deep and affecting tenderness of feeling revealed itself when he took the little children in his arms and blessed them! Who can read his discourses with his disciples at the first supper, without tears? Who can see him seated on Olivet and hear him say, "Oh! Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered your children together as a hen doth her brood under her wings, but ye would not. Behold your house is left unto you desolate!" and not see the beatings of a heart of infinite tenderness? But when the time and the persons call for it, how deep his indignation, how terrible his rebukes! To the malignant, murderous, Christ-hating Pharisees who had made vain the word of God, and were leading the people to ruin, he says, "Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?" See, too, how he varies his rebukes. At meat with another Pharisee, "A woman which was a sinner, brought an alabaster box of ointment and stood at his feet behind him weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet and anointed them with the ointment." Jesus moves not; he lets the poor, sinful creature do her will. But his host said in his heart, "If this man were a prophet, he would have known who and what manner of woman

this is that toucheth him, for she is a sinner." Then Jesus puts to him, with wonderful tact, the case of the creditor and two debtors, and then, turning to the woman, he says, "Simon, seest thou this woman; I entered into thine house; thou gavest me no water for my feet; but she hath washed my feet with tears and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Thou gavest me no kiss; but this woman, since the time I came in, hath not ceased to kiss my feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint; but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment. Wherefore, I say unto thee, her sins, which are many, are forgiven her." What a scene is this for humanity to look upon! What tact in rebuke, adapted to the man and the circumstances! What gentleness and love toward the poor sinner!

And so the very silence of Jesus at certain times reveals his wisdom and requisite perception of fitness. They bring him a woman taken in adultery. They ask for judgment. These proud men will force him to the wall, will compel him to sit as judge. Jesus kneels on the ground and in silence writes on the sand; the poor woman cowers in shame and agony by his side; the haughty Pharisees stand in triumphant self-satisfaction. Silent still! He is confused; he dare not speak! Silent still, while the finger slowly traces something on the ground. Silent still! It is oppressive; what can he say? Then turning upon them his mild searching eye that read their very souls, he says, "He among you that is *without sin*, let him cast the first stone." Again silence, and again the finger writes. But that word, the accusation of a divine judge, flashes into their hearts and flames through each conscience, as the revelation of doom.

Pale, trembling, self-condemned, one steals away, then another, and another, till he is left alone. Then, with his divine calmness and tenderness, he says to the woman, "Go, and sin no more."

So when on trial, he is speechless. Put under oath he simply declares his divine kingship, and that is all. He makes no defense. His silence is the grandest and most eloquent defense. And thus, as I see him in the adaptation of his teachings to men and times, in the gentleness and serenity of his manners, and even in his silence, I say again, never man spake like this man.

6. Still another characteristic of Christ's words is that they all bear upon the great object he had in view. Not a line, not a word is there in all his discourses, that is not directly adapted to establish his Messiahship, or illustrate truth essential to the education of his church in future ages. There is nothing superfluous; nothing you can separate from the living whole without marring its fair proportions. Parable, dialogue, direct discourse all converge right to one point. There are no outside discussions; there are no intellectual recreations; no sportive fancies, or episodic deliverances, on subjects that might amuse and interest men in things not directly connected with his life-work. Open where you will, read what you will, you see the Christ of God opening the things of the kingdom. His one grand object is ever before you. In the calm of private life, or in the storm of controversy; whether his words flow on quietly, or dash in rapids, they all sweep right on to the catastrophe of death and the future church. Magnificent—high above all earthly teachers, as the angel standing in the sun is above all mortals, his utterances are all streams

of light to reveal Christ in God to the world. And between this wonderful unity of his teachings and his life there is a most complete and perfect harmony. Jesus teaching and Jesus acting is a sublime whole. The life illustrates his words, and his words illustrate his life, as parts of one great design. The most perfect work of art, the finest in proportion, color, in expression, never approximated to the consummate harmony and perfection of this great teacher in the unity of his utterances and his life. For they both are the product of one spirit, and that spirit divine. Come here, ye men who love to scan the beautiful, the good, and the true, in nature, in art, or in man; here is one who combines them all in sublime perfection—in a unity of purpose and execution that stands not by itself, as something for mind to recreate itself with, but that bears ever on one grand object, the regeneration and redemption of the immortal soul. Study Jesus of Nazareth, bring all your powers and all your criticisms, and all your finest rules of judgment, and test them upon his character, his utterances, and his life, and see if you will not join with us in saying, never man spake like this man.

7. And now, you will almost anticipate me, in closing this imperfect summary of Christ's character as a teacher, by the mention of his habitual and intense earnestness. There is a living perennial inspiration of feeling that pervades and gives a peculiar character to all his teachings. It is not passion, fitful and changeable in its modes; there is no wild excitement breaking forth, like the rush of a tornado, loud and boisterous; for "he shall not cry nor lift up his voice in the streets." There is a calmness in his speech

which is itself intensely earnest, like the prodigious momentum of a great river, like the silent march of the orb of day. There is an habitual self-control, and a constant expression and holding of each emotion in its fit place, resulting from the perfect harmony of all parts of his spiritual being, and revealing itself in all he utters. But in it and through it there breathes the sublime earnestness of a soul filled with the most grand, and awful, and tender, and momentous truths; a soul possessed and animated by the most intense affections, moving forward with steady, unflinching, irresistible momentum, to the execution of one lofty purpose. He never forgets that he is the Christ, the Son of God; he never forgets that, in his life as the Son of Man, future ages are to learn the perfection of a humanity fashioned according to God's law; he never forgets that his words are to be the light of the world; he never forgets that he is dealing with a ruined race, and that to bring them salvation he speaks and acts; he never loses sight of the cross on which he is to atone for sin, nor of the heaven and hell which are to close the scenes of this life; eternity is ever before him, and he bears on his heart, on his speech on his acts the destinies of millions. See him at his interview, as a youth, with the doctors in the temple; at his baptism, in the wilderness; trace out his life, his words, step by step, in public and private—in Gethsemane, on the cross, and as he ascends to heaven—what sublime earnestness of a soul filled to the brim with the idea and the purpose of his divine mission reveals itself in every utterance, and impresses itself upon all who hear or study his teachings! Ah! never

before, never since, has another appeared who gave so perfectly all his intellect, all his mighty heart, all the concentrated power of his will, all the utterances of his lips, all the acts of his life, for every moment of his being, to the execution of his immortal, sublime purpose. Oh! never, never, in this respect, was there a man who spake like this man.

Review, now, the characteristics of Jesus as a teacher, here briefly and imperfectly presented; his authority, his originality, his radicalness, his unrivaled affluence and richness of thought, his perfect adaptation to times and persons, the concentration of all he taught on one great end, and his earnestness—and is there one here to-night who will not say, Never man spake like this man! Are you willing, then, to sit at his feet and accept him as your teacher, casting away all opposing human opinions? When he says, “Except ye be born again, ye can not enter the kingdom of heaven,” will ye accept it? When he says, “Except ye repent, ye shall perish,” will ye repent? When he commands you to believe on him as the only Savior of your soul, will you do it? When he tells you to take up his cross and follow him, denying yourself daily, will you consent? When he declares that you must confess him before men, if you would have him confess you before his Father in heaven, will you boldly take your stand on his side? Oh! if Christ is to be your teacher, you must accept and follow him, entirely and with all your heart. You can not skulk into the kingdom; you can not climb over the wall and enter; you must go through Christ, the door; you must let him take you by the hand, and lead you; you must not only hear, but obey. I set him before you to-night as your

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divine, your loving teacher, speaking words to you of deathless interest; revealing your immortal soul, in all its guilt and wretchedness, and himself as the only Savior, and opening up to you the issues of a worldly and a Christian life, in hell and heaven. Oh your peril you reject him; at your peril you turn from him this once, and say, I am not disposed now to become his disciple. Oh! that ye were wise, that ye understood where you stand, and would consider your latter end!

## XIX.

THE TEACHINGS OF CHRIST. (NO. 2). THE PARABLES.

*“ And with many such parables spake he the word unto them, as they were able to bear it.”—Mark iv: 33, 34.*

*“ But without a parable spake he not unto them; and when they were alone he expounded all things to his disciples.”—Matt. xiii: 34, 35.*

THE world of nature is a store-house of facts. Man himself is the highest fact in the world; a little world into which is condensed the chief excellence of the outer world. In him is the planning, inventing, imaginative mind that is to appropriate the facts around him, and use them not only for the advantage of his body, but for the enlargement, the enrichment, the delight of his soul. Passing by other things, you will notice the peculiar delight he takes in the comparison of one fact with another; the likeness or unlikeness of one part of nature with another; and how, ascending from the comparison of nature with nature, he traces out resemblances in natural facts with the intellectual and spiritual parts, and exercises, and ideas of his higher nature, or those of God himself. What is purely abstract and ideal, he loves to illustrate and express in natural facts, and images, and similitudes. Nay, language itself is largely composed of such physical facts, transformed into the expression of spiritual or intellectual ideas. Thus one word, virtue—what a

world of spiritual meaning there is in it—what a purely ideal moral principle it expresses. Yet in its original it merely stood for physical strength. But men, seeing a resemblance between the strength or force of body and the firm principle, the lofty soul-purpose that made man strong for the right, took the word and put into it this higher meaning, and so used it until its original idea is almost lost. To discover these resemblances, to express the obscure by the sensible, is an exercise of mind fascinating to us all. The most popular and attractive speakers and writers consult largely this natural disposition in man. The sacred writers are distinguished for the use of figurative language. They range through all their forms, isolated and collected. First we have metaphors, or word-painting, single comparisons, where the meaning flashes at once upon the reader. God is a shield, that is, he is a defense to those who trust in him. Jesus Christ gives knowledge and infuses life into the hearts of men; therefore he is the *sun* of righteousness. And so in thousands of instances. Then we have “allegory,” where some sensible objects or beings represent spiritual ideas in a more connected form, as in the 6th chapter of Revelation the four horses and their riders represent the judgment of God upon the world.

Then we have fables, in which animals or trees and plants are made to speak as men, as in 2 Chron. xxv: 18, when Joash, King of Israel, sent to Amaziah, King of Judah, saying, The thistle that was in Lebanon sent to the cedar that was in Lebanon, saying, give thy daughter to my son to wife; and there passed by a wild beast that dwelt in Lebanon, and trode down the thistle.

And then, lastly, without mentioning other similitudes, we have the parable, the highest of all. The parable is a sensible representation of what may be true in itself; but below it there is still another thought. It is said to be "figure in motion." For it is usually based upon the actions of man in relation to nature or to each other. It has a meaning which is obvious at once; but the real meaning is not so obvious. The outward representation may be true in itself; it must not violate the probable; it is clear at once. But the great ideas intended by it are hidden within this sensible representative, as the meat is within the shell of the nut. The parables of the sower, the prodigal son, the debtors, will at once illustrate these points. You will notice also that the parable is something invented, not discovered. It does not flash upon the mind like a metaphor. It is the result of profound thought; it is one of the highest exercises of the mind. A shallow or uncultivated people never deal in parables. Metaphors, where the thought is in the word; myths, which are the unconscious growth of ages, belong to the rude; but parables, with their double meaning, their outward and their profound spiritual idea underneath, belong to minds of the highest order. Such in general is the nature of the parable.

In this discussion on the parables of Jesus, I shall limit myself to two lines of thought. 1st, The general character of these parables. (1.) One of the first things that strikes you, as you read and study them, is their *exquisite beauty*. They seem to rise naturally, as beautiful flowers spring up in a good soil and clear air. These are none of the artificial works of mere

rhetoric striving to imitate the natural. They break forth from the mind of Christ as perfect inspirations. Like a diamond, they are all finished, clear, perfectly defined. There is an exquisite propriety and fitness in the characters chosen and their action. The parts fit into each other; the details, as well as the general outlines, are all finished. Everything is in proportion. There are no discordant elements or excrescences. The combination of the whole forms a picture which the artist can paint. Many of them, indeed, have been the subjects of the ablest pencils. The Prodigal Son, the Good Shepherd, Lazarus at the gate of Dives, and others, you meet with among the productions of our painters. These products of the mind reveal its character. The parables of Jesus evince the clear intellect from which they sprang. There is nothing equal to them, considered solely as intellectual creations. They stand alone in their combination of naturalness, fitness, harmony, and appropriateness for the end in view. Whatever Jesus touches is consecrated and exalted. Whatever he speaks has something in it, an undefinable beauty, force, fitness or light, that is unapproachable by the mere unaided human intellect. But this, after all, is a point of the least importance. It is only the superficies, the shell, the seeming representation. The point of most importance, that of deepest interest, that which most sets off these parables from all others, and stamps them with the divine impress, is the subject-matter which lies within them.

(2.) I call your attention therefore to the *profound truths* in these parables. Other parables respect ordinary truths, or such as the human mind can readily discover; but these are no common truths. They are

the most profound and comprehensive in religion. They are most essential to the existence and progress of true religion in the world. The nature of the kingdom of God; the relations of man to God; the position of Christ, and his future relations to the Church, are here represented. No metaphysician, however acute, no mere human reasoner, ever reached down to these sublime truths in their fullness and power. Had the Savior spoken a parable respecting the true theory of the universe; had he, in that age, in the infancy of natural science, embodied in one of these scenic representations the grand principles which control the movements of this natural creation far away to the outposts of the universe; had he told us the constitution of suns and planets, and admitted us into the secrets of God's universal natural government, that truth would not have been as profound, as vital to man, as essential to his immortal interests, as powerful to mold his character and elevate him in the scale of intelligence, as the least of those with respect to which these parables were spoken. But the greatness and the excellence of these truths will come out more fully as we proceed.

(3.) Look, then, at the variety of these parables. Of those which Christ spoke, over thirty have been recorded, chiefly by Matthew and Luke. No two of these are exactly alike; and the object of each is different. The central point is the kingdom of God; but they are all so many reflectors of the different aspects of this kingdom. A grand, profound, and sublime, yet most practical of all schemes of thought and action in the universe, is this system. All parts of it can not be seen at once, or from one side. It is many-

sided, vast, reaching down from God to man. Its corner-stone is Christ on earth; its crown is Christ in heaven. And these parables respect its nature, its spirit, its basis, the relations which God holds to man and the ways in which man comes to God, and so ascends from this present transitory state to the heavenly mansion. Take, for illustration, a few of these: The Mustard Seed, the Leaven, illustrate the growth of this kingdom; the power and moral influence of truth in gradually moving the minds of men. The Hid Treasure, the Pearl of Great Price, bring into view the priceless nature of redemption and the absolute consecration of all that a man has of power, or wealth, or talent, to obtain it. The Good Samaritan opens to us the spirit of this kingdom in reference to men in distress. The Prodigal Son shows the nature of repentance, and divine mercy. The Wise and Foolish Virgins evince the difference between true and false professions. The Friend at Midnight gives us the principle of prayer. The Wicked Husbandman is prophetic of the treatment of Jesus. The Sheep and the Goats present the judgment and the principle on which the bearers of the gospel will be judged—"their treatment of Christ." It is astonishing how strikingly different, yet how one in purpose and result, are these thirty-one parables. You know how many pictures a photographer will take of the same city, as he places his camera at different points. Each of these pictures will have its own character, different from the others, and yet, put together, they all unite in portraying the same scene. So, the kingdom of Christ has various points and principles: the feelings of God

toward man ; the work of Christ ; the method of approach to God ; the spirit of the new life ; all the great and precious things which men most need to know in order to understand the real nature of this divine religion and the way of salvation, are brought out in these wonderful discourses of Jesus. If you look at them, either in their separate completeness or in their combined unity ; if you consider the immensely important and profound principles they involve, or the originality of the views they contain, you will say that the world has never seen any thing like them, any thing to be compared with them, and you will feel that only He who is the true light of men could possibly have spoken them. For it is not the originality and beauty and profundity of any one parable, surpassingly excellent as it may be, but it is the combined unity in all this variety, the concentration of so many rays of light upon the one point, the true nature of Christ's kingdom, that impresses you most deeply, and makes you realize that only a mind of infinite scope and penetration and holiness could have given such views to men, and lifted them heaven high above all other similar products of the human mind.

(4.) In addition to these general remarks on the character of the parables, I mention the universality of their application. It is the tendency of the human mind to localize and limit whatever it sees and apprehends. Even if it grasps a great principle, from its narrowness, it is prone to limit it to the one time, the one age, the one people. But as I remarked to you in speaking of the direct discourses of Christ, so here in the parables there are contained principles of spiritual thought and action, limited to no age, no people, no

clime; just as universal as man himself. Some of them, indeed, on their face have, and were designed to have, a local application. The parable of the Good Samaritan was meant to illustrate the living, present character of the priests and Levites of that time. The two sons, the wicked husbandman, were meant to apply directly to the Jews and Gentiles—to the wicked and murderous Scribes and Pharisees who were so soon to crucify their Messiah, the only begotten Son of God. But beneath this immediate application there were great principles, which would characterize other races and peoples, the world over, in their treatment of the gospel. To-day, in this land, you find the same principles of conduct animating men in their conduct toward the Savior. Nor is there a single one of these parables that might not have been spoken in New York, or in Utica, as well as in Galilee or Jerusalem. They shed light not only upon the kingdom of God, but upon the relations and conduct of men towards Jesus Christ, all over the world. And when you put all these things together, the requisite beauty and fitness of these scenic representations of the kingdom of Jesus, the profound spiritual and universal truths they involve, the variety in unity, the combination of these various images to represent the different aspects of the one living kingdom of God among men, then you may begin to appreciate how, here as elsewhere, Jesus spake as never man spake.

2. But leaving this part of our subject, I must hasten to our *second* line—the answer to the question of his disciples, “*Why speakest thou in parables?*” It is an obvious fact that in the early part of his ministry Jesus discoursed directly to the people. His language was

indeed full of metaphors and images and brief similitudes; but the thought was so married to the expression as to flame out at once to their apprehension. Then after a time there is a change. He speaks so largely in parables publicly, that it is recorded that without them he did not speak at all to the people. The change was so surprising as to excite the curiosity of the disciples as to the reason. His answer is given in the 13th chapter of Matt. xi: 17; Isa. vi: 9. In explanation of this part of our subject, let us consider, then, a few things. (1.) The parable has the peculiar power of veiling the offensiveness of its real meaning so that it shall only gradually be perceived. Jesus, in the beginning, spoke plainly and directly. But it was not long, in spite of that reserve on some of the capital points of his doctrine, before the malignant opposition of his hearers to the truth began to manifest itself. They had actually reached that stage of feeling described by Isaiah as characteristic of the Jews of his day. There was a fierce and terrible excitement among the leaders of the people. The doctrines of Jesus, already enunciated in their mildest form, were in such total opposition to their corrupt notions, their traditional interpretations of the word, their rigid formalism; they tended so decidedly to the overthrow of their whole superstructure of religion, that already their fanaticism had taken fire. But if Jesus had continued thus plainly to unfold the truth; had he at once, breaking through his reserve, declared the whole system of Christianity, long before his work of educating and training his disciples was accomplished, he would have been held before the Sanhedrim, indicted, judged, condemned, and destroyed.

His character, his pretensions, his miracles, his words had already excited universal attention. He was beset with spies from Jerusalem; he was speaking amidst the kindling fanaticism of a people, who, when once roused, were the fiercest, the most stubborn in all history—a people who, in opposition to Titus at Jerusalem, perished by the million, perished by their own hand, rather than yield. For Christ to pilot his way amidst this surging sea for three years until his work in the preparation of his disciples and the full establishment of his Messiahship was completed, demanded superhuman wisdom, and this wisdom he put forth.

In these circumstances Jesus chose to speak in parables. Now the parable has this peculiarity; it has two meanings, one very plain and simple, and another profound and real; one, obvious to all, another that requires study and thought and reflection, that even to the wise only dawns upon them gradually and exercises their profoundest discrimination. Hence the maxims of the old rabbis, that parables were not meant for the rude, the uncultivated. Jesus chose them expressly that these malignants might not understand. He purposely veiled the truth from them, and explained it only in private to his disciples. These representations of truth were wholly new to them. The parables are clear to us, because we have the key to unlock them—the gospel itself, of which they are an epitome. But by them the deeper meaning was unperceived; for had it been, the cross would have been anticipated and the roused fanaticism of the leaders would have planted it ere his work was done. Nor could these parables have been the foundation for an indictment in either the civil or religious courts.

The plainest and most terrible in its meaning, that of the wicked husbandman, could not have been made the ground of condemnation, however his enemies might have felt that in its deeper view it meant them as the murderers of the Messiah. Thus you see how, in choosing the parable, Jesus acted with consummate wisdom for the accomplishment of his great end. Those he meant to see, he made to see; those from whom he designedly withheld the truth, saw not at all or dimly and inferentially. And in this there was divine wisdom.

I have thus stated to you the chief reason, as given by our Savior, for his use of parables in addressing the people. But it seems to me that, by examining these forms of address, we may discover subordinate reasons for their employment. One of these is the fact (2) *that they furnished a fine basis for the explanation of the deeper meaning, and fixed that meaning more firmly in the mind.* As they were spoken, they excited the greatest curiosity and even anxiety on the part of the disciples to understand them. This was just the state of mind Jesus designed to produce. What does it mean? "Declare unto us the parable;" and Jesus then, in private, proceeds to explain the hidden meaning. Truth after truth, one aspect of the kingdom of God after another, is opened to them. Their inquiries are answered; their curiosity is gratified. The circle of thought and knowledge is enlarged. Gradually the light enters, and as it enters it dissipates the darkness; error after error is dislodged; prejudice is overcome, and the mind is accustomed to the new ways of thought; it rises into a higher sphere; the eyes get used to the brightness, and the whole soul sees and

grasps more clearly and definitely the great object before it.

But not only did the parable thus furnish the happiest occasion for the fuller opening of the truth, it served to fix that truth more firmly in the mind. It did this by associating it with a visible representation, a sensible image of the truth itself. You are all familiar with the laws of association in respect to memory. You know how some place, some object that was connected with some conversation you held, or some things you heard, will recall that conversation or those words years afterward. What is called the science of mnemonics, or memory, is based upon this simple principle. You associate the name of Alexander with a horse—his Bucephalus; Cæsar with a rejected crown; Napoleon with an eagle; Michael Angelo with St. Peter's; Christopher Wren with St. Paul's; and the thought of those objects brings the associated idea to mind. Now the more natural, the more truly like the sensible representation is, and the less arbitrary, the more readily it suggests the thought, the more readily the mind holds the truth itself. These parables were sensible representations—images; and the moment the explanation was connected with them and the points of resemblance perceived, the living thought was married to it, fixed there forever. So you will often hear men recount, twenty, thirty years after, some illustration of a thought they heard given by a speaker, when the discourse itself has utterly faded from the memory. And in this very way our Savior fixed these higher truths of his kingdom in the minds of his yet half-enlightened disciples. They

could not forget them, unless memory wholly refused to do her office.

(3.) But this is not all the excellent use which parables effected in the church of Christ. They served to excite thought and study, not only among the disciples that were with him, but in all future time. Of some of them he gave brief explanations, sufficient to guide the mind in its further study. Of others there is no recorded explanation. They are all living, quickening powers, the seed corn of thought, left for the minds of his people in every age to trace out the various parts of the similitude in their correspondence with the nature, progress, and history of his kingdom. Some of them are prophetic, and reach on to the day of judgment. All of them embrace principles to be more fully verified and illustrated in Christian experience, in God's treatment of his people and the world, and in their conduct toward him. How beautifully God's mercy is illustrated in the parable of the prodigal son; but how much is that representation clarified and magnified as we see Jesus suffering on the cross, the just for the unjust. The parable of the good Samaritan involves the true idea of human brotherhood and the necessity of caring for all in their distress and sorrow; but how grandly does this meaning come out, now that the Jewish nationality is swept away, and Jew and Gentile are placed on the same footing, and the command of Christ is, "Go preach my gospel to every creature." "The kingdom of heaven is like unto a mustard seed;" but how wonderfully does the meaning shine out now, since Christianity has grown and spread with such marvelous rapidity. Here, to-day, as you study these parables, how the varied

aspects of the kingdom of Jesus, the methods of its progress, the difficulties in its way; the signal facts in its history, the principles of its future growth, come forth into still clearer light. All men delight to read them; children are attracted by them, and Christians find in them a store of heavenly wisdom, and rejoice to see there new correspondencies with truth, and nature, and experience. Thus the parables of Jesus not only served to present and yet veil the truth from the malignant persecutors of his own age, but they also served as the basis on which he founded the explanation of their deeper meaning to his own disciples; by which he fixed the truth in their minds; through which he quickens the mind of his people in all ages to clearer thought, and so enriches their minds and establishes their souls in the fuller understanding of the nature and progress and future of his glorious kingdom. Here, as elsewhere, his divine, all-comprehensive wisdom signally shines forth. So remarkable, so resplendent, so divine, are these parables, that errorists and infidels, in despair of imitating them, have turned themselves to other methods, more in the compass of the natural reason, in order to alter or undermine the truth of God.

Perhaps now, before I pass to some concluding observations, I ought to mention the fact, that some of our ablest commentators have endeavored to trace out a peculiar progress of thought in these parables. It is said that Jesus spake them to his disciples as they were able to bear them, able to receive the truth contained in them, prepared to enter in and appreciate their full meaning. Thus we have given us three cycles of parables. The first eight begins with the Sower

and ends with the Net cast into the Sea. These are all taken from the world of nature, and respect more especially the nature of the kingdom. Then, after an interval, comes another style of parable, drawn not so much from nature as from the life of man. They are sixteen in all, beginning with the Two Debtors and ending with the Laborers in the Vineyard. But when we reach the closing period of his ministry, they assume still another character. They are taken, indeed, from the world of nature, but they relate chiefly to the final consummation of the kingdom. In part they are prophetic; but in all the end is seen in the distance; the summons is heard to judgment; the clock is striking toward the midnight hour. They are seven in number, beginning with the parable of the Pounds and closing with the most fearful of them all, the Sheep and the Goats—the final scene of judgment.

Such, as I have had time to speak of them in general, are the parables, and such the reason of their use. Such is Jesus as he taught in parables—taught, not only for that age, but all ages; not only for his immediate disciples, but his followers in all the future. In form they are unrivaled in beauty and fitness; in the profound truths they involve, they are sublime, they are divine. History, prophecy, and the deep truths of his kingdom, are here for us to study, to understand, and to appropriate as our guide and stimulus to thought and action. If ye have eyes to see, see ye; if ye have ears to hear, hear ye! What a terrible condition of malignancy and hate was that which led Jesus to speak in parables, which compelled the divine Son to veil the truth from them in order to establish his kingdom in the hearts of his disciples?

Oh! hate most malignant; oh! depravity most foul, which doubted, denied, mocked, hounded, cursed the Redeemer, and reached its horrible consummation when he hung on the cross! Oh! man, what art thou, in thy state of nature, but a demon, a fiend, to bear such fruits of sin—to cast the Son, the heir, out of his inheritance, and dye thy hands in his blood! Well, that fearful vision is past; that terrible scene is a fact in history eighteen hundred years old. Man has improved; he has studied natural science; he has put on another nature; the wolf is a lamb now, the tiger is a peaceful deer!! Hear ye, then, who have ears to hear! Christ is dead; Christ is risen; Christ is ascended. His Church lives. Millions love him and would die for him to-day. Along this history are miracles of healing, of love, of renovation, of faith. All that is pure and good and meet for heaven in this world, his hand created. Prophecy is fulfilled, is fulfilling on every side. Hear ye? Do you believe? Do you accept this Christ as your Redeemer? Are you one of God's little children? Are you willing to deny yourself, and take up your cross and follow him? Are you a repentant sinner, living by faith in Jesus, and ready to give all and hazard all for his kingdom and crown? Have your eyes been open to see, your ears to hear, the truth he speaks from day to day and Sabbath to Sabbath? Alas! there are those who can read the last parable, the representation of judgment, and mock at the awful truth. Is there one here to-night from whom the truth is hidden—hidden because they are lost? Pupils, sons of Herod and Caiaphas? Or, if you regret this devilish paternity, whose sons are you? Is Agrippa your father? Do you say, "Almost,

thou persuadest me to be a Christian?" Is Pontius Pilate your father? Scornful skeptic, asking what is truth, at this day of light! Are you for Christ, or against him? Decide now. The summer is over and gone; the leaves are falling, fading; winter is coming. Is it so with you? Must you say, The harvest is past; the summer is ended; and we are not saved?

## XX.

HIS TEACHINGS (NO. 3)—HIS CONVERSATIONAL DISCOURSES.

*“There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God; for no man can do these miracles that thou hast done, except God be with him.”—John iii: 1, 2.*

*“The officers answered, Never man spake like this man.”—John vii: 46.*

*“And no man was able to answer him a word; neither durst any man, from that day forth, ask him any more questions.”—Mat. xxii: 46.*

IN addressing you on Christ as a teacher, I have spoken on his teaching in didactic discourse, on his teaching in parables, and to-night we are to view him as teaching in conversational discourse. This is the most natural, and consequently the most ancient form of instruction. It is informal, social, admitting of question and answer, and for this reason brings the mind of the teacher and scholar in more direct contact. The ancients very largely followed this method. Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, employed it. Demosthenes was a great orator, with power to move and enlighten a multitude on common topics. But the profoundest teachers were not orators, and took a more direct and informal mode of inculcating great principles. Cicero was a remarkable orator; but in some of his ablest

works he has resorted to the dialogue as best fitted to bring out his ideas and enforce them. At the time of the French revolution, there were great orators like Mirabeau, and able writers like Diderot and Rousseau; but in their salons there were a greater number of bright, witty, thoughtful conversationalists who exerted a vast influence on the society of that day. And with us some like Jefferson have exerted their chief power in conversation, while our confessedly ablest teachers most generally employ this method. Our Savior, while freely employing the other modes of instruction—didactic discourse and parables—yet largely adopts this method. Indeed, the necessities of his position compelled him to this course. It was necessary not merely in reference to his disciples, with whom he conversed in private, but also to meet the popular or more abstruse difficulties of the people and the learned. Here he demonstrates the same unquestioned superiority, the same affluence of resources, which characterize all his other teachings. He came in contact with the ablest minds of that nation, and swept away their profoundest objections. They were as children before him, as farthing candles in presence of the sun.

In order to appreciate his teaching in this line, we must notice: 1. The different classes of persons to whom he spoke and the consummate wisdom with which he adapted himself to their characters and wants. One of these classes was the sincere inquirers—men whose desire was to know the truth. Such were his immediate disciples, and persons like Nicodemus among the more intelligent. To these he spoke quietly, and unfolded the truth more at length

than he did to the public. He adapted himself and his instructions to their peculiar characters and wants. He is tender, yet commanding; familiar, yet full of unspeakable dignity. A second class was the Pharisees and Sadducees. Those, full of the conceit of their own wisdom, with no sympathy for the truth, were intent, not at all on the acquisition of knowledge, but on justifying their opposition to his claims as Messiah, on criticising his language, detecting some falsity or error in his annunciations, and especially did they conspire to wring from him something, some expression that might be made the ground of accusation and condemnation before the Sanhedrim. For this purpose they raise questions that might involve him in difficulty with the civil powers as well as the ecclesiastical. They follow him with all the stealth and cunning of an Indian hunting a foe. Understanding fully their character and purpose, his answers to their questions are generally very short and decided. Penetrating at once their disguised hostility, he does not hesitate to tear the masks from their faces and denounce them as serpents, a generation of vipers. He never parleys with them, nor plays with them, nor exhibits the least color of friendship; nor holds them off at arm's length and strikes them down with fearful energy. His holy nature, his abhorrence of hypocrisy, of their malignant opposition to the truth, of their wicked influence over the people and their bloody spirit towards himself as the Son of God, breaks forth upon them. They were not to be propitiated; neither innocence, nor miracles, nor the clearest manifestation of divine truth, affected their hearts. It was for Jesus to silence them by his superior wisdom

and exhibit their true characters as blind leaders of the blind. A third class was the mixed multitude, some half-enlightened, many rude and ignorant; all variable, unsettled, largely under the influence of the Pharisees, now and then greatly awed and moved by Jesus. With these the spies of his enemies constantly intermingled, so that in addressing them he virtually spoke to the whole nation. His conversational discourses with them correspond with these facts. There is the same caution and reserve on some points, joined with great boldness and clearness on others, which we have seen in the Sermon on the Mount and the parables. From the same necessity he speaks largely in figurative language—in figures often exceedingly bold and startling, which they in their present temper and position could not fully understand, which indeed were only to be made clear in the future by his own death and resurrection. Almost the only clear instance of irony is found in his address to this class. In answer to the assertion, that he could not be the Messiah, because they knew whence he came, “Ye both know me and ye know whence I am!” Indeed! “I am not come of myself, but He that sent me is true, whom ye know not!” As thus you re-examine the classes of the persons thus addressed, you will see the peculiar wisdom with which he adapted himself to their characters.

2. I wish you now to notice the peculiar and original manner in which he presents divine thought in these discussions. He does not reason as men generally reason. He uses logic, but not as other teachers. It is a peculiar, illuminated logic, the statement of some great principle or fact which at once settles the

question. It is the logic of the lightning. He sets up a pillar of light, which stands for all the ages. He does not elaborate premise and conclusion, approaching the point by slow advances, as Socrates, and the greatest uninspired thinkers have done. With extraordinary condensation he gives the principle or the fact which is decisive, but which men must study and elaborate for themselves, which stirs their minds to effort; which is pregnant with unexhausted thought; which unlocks the gate of knowledge not only for them but for all. Had he stopped to reason out point by point, all the vast questions pertaining to his kingdom, instead of three he would have required a hundred years for his work. He condenses a world of thought into a sentence; he leaves men to use their logic in the attempt to trace out its manifold bearings. As illustrating his wonderful superiority to all others in this respect, look at some of his answers to questions not immediately referring to himself. The Jewish power had been subdued by the Roman. Caesar demanded tribute from the people who acknowledged no other king but God, or one who as his representative should represent their own theocratic nationality. The question with the Jew was, will conscious loyalty to God authorize or permit him to pay tribute to the heathen sovereign? They bring the question to Jesus. He asks for a penny. Upon it is the image and superscription of Caesar. To coin money was the prerogative of sovereignty. Which side of this question will Jesus take, and how will he justify his decision? Other minds would have elaborated an argument, gone into the reasons for or against the payment; brought a long

legal dissertation with premises and conclusion, reviewing the ancient law and seeking to demonstrate by logic the right answer. Not so does Jesus answer. One flash of thought ; one short sentence uttered in a breath : "Render, therefore, unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and unto God the things that are God's." Now see here the pregnant fertility, the profound penetration, the world-wide comprehension of these few words. 1. It affirms the divine approbation of civil government. Cæsar has rights, and these are given him of God. 2. It affirms the separation of church and state. Religion has its own special duties and rights, and these belong not to the state. 3. It affirms the dissolution of the old theocratic constitution under which the Jewish nation had lived, with the temporary interruption of the captivity, since the law given by Moses. 4. It affirmed that in the kingdom of God, now to be set up ; in other words, that the Christian church, now to spread over the world and prevail under different governments, should no longer be a state or a national church, to be presided over by the civil ruler, but a living, distinct organism of its own, with no visible head on earth, with God in Christ as its own living head in heaven. Here, in this brief declaration, are involved the living principles of Christ's kingdom ; principles which struck at the heart of the mixed Jewish system ; principles which worldly minds in the church and the world, for the sake of power, have utterly disregarded, and by such disregard have introduced corruption into the universal church itself ; principles which can lift up their voice protesting against the vast and wicked assumptions alike of Constantine, Hildebrand, and Victoria ; principles

which we in this free land are seeking to maintain, and, Christ helping us, will maintain, if necessary, by trampling upon king, or pope, or president, if they seek authority when God has never given it.

Take another example. The Sadducees were the rationalists, the scoffers of that age, like the Pope and the materialists of more modern times. They not only denied the resurrection, but a future state, and resolved man into a mere refined animal. So they must try their power of argument with this new teacher, and, in doing this, they bring a test question, an argument about as clear and irresistible as those employed by nine-tenths of our mere naturalists when they get out of the region of facts and attempt to enter the higher region of spiritual thought. If a woman has had seven husbands here, whose wife shall she be in the resurrection? You see at once the grossness of their conceptions of the future state. The answer of Jesus lets in the light—"In the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God." Heaven is not the gross state you imagine. The regimen of that world is not of earth. Then, compassing the depths of their unbelief, he puts forth that sublime declaration of Jehovah, "I am the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob;" not of the dead, but of the living. God has a living kingdom of spirits that circle his throne. Man is not material; the soul lives forever; it shall dwell yet in a spiritual body and worship God forever. He does not say now, "I am the resurrection and the life." That thrilling annunciation is reserved for a more fitting time and another audience. But by his divine attestation, that the soul lives evermore, he pours confusion upon these

scoffers of the future world. Thus, originally, in this superhuman style, does he bring forth his thoughts in these conversational and often controversial discourses with the men of that time.

3. Turn now to a third point characteristic of these conversations; the intensely personal relations of Christ to the kingdom of God among men. I do not mean here the mere personality of Jesus, but the personality, the person of Christ himself in his relations to humanity and religion. In this respect, he exhibits an entire contrast to all the prophets preceding him and the apostles who came after him. They are wholly impersonal. They are merely the annunciators of the will of God; mere agents to unfold his truth. Their personal character has nothing to do with the truth and efficacy of their mission; whether they are perfect or imperfect, learned or ignorant in themselves, is of small consequence. For they hold no vital relation to the church; it is the truth God proclaims through them that alone is vital and important. The greatest of the ancient prophets, the sublime law-giver of the old dispensation, reveals this contrast in the highest degree. The work of Moses was the greatest of any performed by these prophets before the time of Christ. The Pentateuch is the charter of Israel, the constitution of the Jewish theocracy, the national law of the one chosen people. No man can estimate or hardly begin to estimate the vast and profound influence of that constitution upon the religious interests of the world. In an age rushing wildly into idolatry and polytheism, this wonderful revelation sets up before men, as a steady pillar of fire, the unity of God and the obligation of men to love and serve him alone. In an

age when the traditional knowledge of God was being deeply corrupted, and nations were descending into utter demoralization, this held up the divine standard of religion and a pure life. The authority of Moses was established by God himself. When men attempted to dispute it, they were stricken down with an un pitying hand. Miracles attended his progress and authenticated his mission. Yet in all this, Moses is simply a servant; nothing, not a particle of the vitality or power of his work depends upon the original character of the man himself. It is God standing behind him, God lifting the sign of his presence before him, to whom everything is referred, for whom the heart-faith and obedience of the people are demanded. The personality of Moses is sunk. He is an imperfect man, like other men, differing from them neither in his organic constitution nor in his personal character. He is but the agent of the divine will, and in that as impersonal as the electricity which God uses to create the thunder and the lightning. In the Pentateuch, it is not Moses, but God who speaks. It might have been any other person had God so chosen. His personal traits, indeed, fitted him to be the instrument of divine power, but they were not vital to it. And when he died, the word and the law remained as the divine handiwork, wholly unaffected. *His* authority passes with his life; but that which created and sustained it, stood in eternal, living supremacy. Now, turn to Jesus, and see in these conversational discourses the amazing contrast. The same miraculous power attested his divine mission; words, rich beyond all human thought in divine wisdom, flowed from his lips. What, then, are the questions which agitate, which stir

almost to phrensy the Jewish mind? It is not whether he is a teacher—a mere prophet sent from God. Nicodemus unquestionably expresses the secret conviction of the nation when he said, “*We know* thou art a teacher sent from God, for no man can do these miracles which thou doest, unless God be with him.” The question is deeper than this; this alone furnishes no solution of the unparalleled opposition he encountered. The question of the hour is wholly personal. Is he the mysterious object of prophesy—the Messiah? Is he, like us, an imperfect creature, organically constituted like us, or is he the divinely constituted Son of God? Whence did he come? How did he originate? How came this unlearned, uneducated Nazarene to possess all knowledge? It was not so much what Christ does, as what *he is*, that startles, perplexes, and agitates the public mind. His personality, his individual character, his original constitution and vital relation to religion, are the things which attract every mind, lift themselves to view at every point of these discussions, give force and heat to question and answer, and criticism, and divine annunciation. For these were the most amazing, the most important questions ever given to the human mind for solution. Natural science, national politics, the ordinary truths of religion, were insignificant compared with these. They were no more to be compared with it in grandeur and interest, than the construction of a watch to the construction of the universe.

A brief review of some of these conversations will set this point before us with the utmost distinctness. The conversation with Nicodemus is private. He deals with him as a sincere inquirer. In the beginning he

remarks upon the fundamental truth—regeneration by the Spirit essential to an entrance into the kingdom of heaven. For this was a truth, which Nicodemus as a master in Israel was bound to understand. But from this he passes almost immediately to the great question at issue—his personal character—his nature and office work. He describes himself as pre-existent and omnipresent. “No man has ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of Man, which *is in* heaven.” What sort of a being is this whose original is from heaven, who is present there even while walking here on earth? Nicodemus, can you understand that? Can you tell who this being is who now talks with them? Then comes another astounding assertion. Looking ahead, Jesus sees the cross on which he is to hang—a sacrifice for sin. Moses reared a brazen serpent to heal Israel; that was a symbol of my greater work. The Son of Man shall be lifted up, that men believing in me may not perish. Then comes that most sublime, most affecting truth of all the ages: “God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in *him* might not perish, but have everlasting life”—words worth more than all that uninspired men ever wrote—the charter of salvation—the epitome of redemption for a world in sin. And so on to the close of these great facts and assertions, one thing stands forth clear as sunlight, that the office work of Jesus rests on his nature as the Divine Son, and that Christ himself is the heart, the life, the power of an efficacious salvation. The assertion here is not merely that God is merciful—the ground of mercy, the way of mercy, and this is the death of his only-begotten Son. Nothing

in the prophets like this ; nothing in profane history like this ; nothing in the universe like this. Oh ! if the world will but believe this with all their heart, then will Christ be seen leading that world in mass upward to heaven.

Take another private conversation held with the woman of Samaria at Jacob's well. Imagine her astonishment when, in the course of this conversation, he says : " If thou knowest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, ' Give me to drink,' thou wouldst have asked of him, and he would have given thee *living* water." She questions who that can be. He tells her further : " The water that I shall give shall be in him (who receives) a well of water springing up into everlasting life." Wondrous words ! A dim idea of something here of great excellence dawns upon her mind, and she says : " Give me this water." And you and I and every soul thirsting for the life of God cry out, O, Jesus, give us of this water ! And so he leads her on, opening her own past life, and the spiritual nature of worship, till she speaks of the great expectation—Messiah to come ; and then he answers : I that speak unto thou " am he." Here, too, in all this scene some one more than a prophet or a teacher is before us ; Messiah, the life-giver, unveils himself to our eyes and hearts.

In the fifth chapter of John, the conversation which follows his healing of the impotent man on the Sabbath, in justification of that act, is full to overflowing of these descriptions of his original divine nature. " My Father worketh hitherto and I work." What blasphemy if he is not in nature the Son of God ! Who will blame the Jews for their opposition, when

he makes himself equal to God, if he is not originally one with him in being? What follows this awful declaration? Just what ought to follow from this divine equality. He and the Father act as one in all the marvelous works he performs. Yea! he is the life quickener, that men may know him as they do the Father. His power shall not only quicken dead souls to life, but raise the dead. He shall sit on the throne of sovereignty to judge the world. At every step you see how his work, his office, intermingle with and are grounded upon his personal being and character as the Son of God.

So in the sixth chapter he declares his infinite superiority to Moses. The bread which Moses gave was earthly, but Christ is the living bread from heaven, of which, if a man eat, he shall never hunger. And when they murmur at this wonderful truth, he rises to still bolder expressions. He will give his flesh and blood for the life of man; he foreshadows his death on the cross; and declares that whosoever shall eat of this bread shall live forever.

But I pass on. The sinfulness of man, of all men, is a fact of consciousness and history. No prophet, however great; no apostle, however full of the spirit, ever affirmed his own sinlessness. But Jesus, in answer to the malignant charges of the Pharisees, rises above all prophets; he takes himself out of the operation of this universal law: "Which of you convict me of sin," or rightly chargeth sin upon me. How outspoken the heavenly consciousness of indwelling purity! And this single fact of sinlessness, which gathers the demonstration of itself from every part of

his holy and sublime life, is of transcendent importance. It takes him out of the order of a fallen humanity. It was absolutely essential that he who was to be made sin for us should be himself without sin, and, as the spotless Lamb of God, be offered for the sins of the world.

But time fails me fully to unfold this part of our subject. These conversational discourses are unique, original, unlike any others ever written—as far above them in vital truths and sublimity as the stars are distant from this globe of ours. And the grand peculiarity that distinguishes them from all other dialogues, be they of prophet, apostle, or the great uninspired men of the past, is the fact that they center in the person and work of Jesus; in the superhuman nature of the incarnate Son and his work as the Redeemer of the souls of men. Here is the demonstration of Jesus Christ as the Savior of sinners. Here, as you read and study, the solemn declaration comes home to the heart of every one of us. He that believeth shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be damned.

4. Another fact which impresses you in these conversations is that Jesus Christ alone bears the chief part in them. In public or in private he alone stands forth in his solitary majesty; he alone bears the burden of instruction, the brunt of opposition. No brother like Aaron, no great mind or strong hand is with him, to aid, to encourage, to join forces with his. His disciples are mere children, sources of weakness rather than strength. With the utmost calmness, the utmost courage, he stands amidst the thronging crowds, he utters his words in presence of his fierce opposers. His life is in hourly peril, his words

heighten the fierce fanaticism that is watching and thirsting for his blood. He moves alone in the sacred courts of the temple. He burst into being alone; he bears the burden of trial and sorrow all alone. Learned men are there; great men are there; men in high authority are there; but one form, one mind, attracts all eyes, stirs all hearts. In his presence Pharisee and Scribe, priest and rabbi, and Sadducee, are as infants. So is it to the end. When he has fought this fierce battle with the powers of earth, then all alone he treads the winepress of the wrath of God, and dies upon the cross. Alone in the sublimity of all human and divine excellence the incarnate Son meets the world.

5. Now, as we hasten to the end, you will notice the *effect* of these conversations upon those who heard them. First, look at his opponents. The Pharisees and Scribes, possessed of the highest religious knowledge, acute, combative and persistent, put forth all their powers to entangle him in his words, to wring something from him that might either be made the basis of an accusation, or the means of weakening his authority. With amazing readiness, clearness, and power he answers every question, anticipates every objection, and pours a divine light on subjects which had baffled their profoundest scholars. Convicted, if not convinced, baffled and silenced, they turn from him to nourish the hatred his conquering words had intensified, and plot for the destruction of one who was so infinitely superior to their wisest. They are silenced. Then another foe enters the arena. The skeptical and acute Sadducees assail him. The eternal truth of God springing from his lips smites their presumption

to the earth. So great is his victory over all the might of learning, that no man dare question him again. In his friends, on the sincere inquirer, his words inspired confidence, expectation, assurance of his Messiahship. On the multitude at large the impression made is that of wonder and amazement at his superiority. The very officers sent to arrest him cower before him, their arms grow weak, they dare not approach him. Never man spake like this man is their answer to those who sent them. The grandeur of his character, the wisdom, the vastness of his knowledge, the holiness that shed divine brightness in his countenance, filled them with awe, as in the presence of the real Son of God. As far as holiness, intelligence, the power of the living utterance of living truth could triumph, Jesus triumphed. So profound is the impression of his amazing superiority upon the multitude; so small, so mean did all other men appear in the comparison, that again and again, had he consented, they would have taken this young man, without a particle of civil power, without a party, this man who had never appealed to their passions, nor flattered their self-conceit, nor moved an inch out his own lofty line of conduct to win their approbation, who had inculcated only the strictest tests of duty, and revealed only profound spiritual truth to their minds—this man they would have taken and made him king, and crowned him, in spite of Caiaphas and Pilate, as their Messiah. One word of his would have marshaled millions around him, and swept away priest and Roman from the city and the soil of Judea. That word he spake not. It was not thus to be. It was not thus God's kingdom was to be established. On other

foundations, by other means than earthly power, was he to win his sublime victory. The crown of the world he had rejected when the prince of darkness offered it. Ah, another scene arises before him; his blood must flow; his heart be broken; the extremest agony be endured, before the hour of his final victory shall come. This prince of princes, this wisest of scholars, this most eloquent of orators, this grandest of prophets, this being of superhuman power over nature and man, must die—die to live and triumph and open the gates of heaven to a sinful world. We read now these words of Jesus as if they were only history. He appears in all these conversations in grand and majestic proportions; he rises above not only his time, but all time. But Jesus is not dead; he lives among us still; his words are not of the past alone, they vibrate in the heart, they quicken a new life in the souls of men at this hour. We wish we could see that wonderful countenance and hear that voice which silenced or awed or quickened men. But to-day we have a Savior dead and risen, and mighty on his throne. His words are no longer enigmas; his being no longer a mystery; his prophecies no longer unfulfilled; we see, we know that he is the incarnate Son of God, the sacrifice for our sins, the Redeemer of men. To-day in the world are the same Pharisees, ritualists, formalists, whom he put to shame; the same Sadducees, unbelievers, scoffers at the spiritual, the supernatural, whom he silenced; the same uncertain, ignorant multitude he both attracted and repelled; the same sincere inquirers, full of hope and joy for the future, because they believe his word. Nicodemus and the publican and the penitent thief

are here still. But, thank God, there are here a vast multitude who have entered the kingdom. And here, too, in men, are the same exhaustless desires, the same hunger and thirst for something better than the things of this life, the same hearts laboring under the guilt and power of sin, and longing to have the assurance they shall never die. And Jesus is the same divine water, the same living bread, the same great physician, who alone can quench the soul's thirst, and satisfy its hunger, and heal its maladies, and quicken it with a new life. Oh! ye men and women, who know that as ye drink the earthly water ye must thirst again, hear Christ saying to you, "Come to me; the water that I shall give, shall be in you a well of water springing up into everlasting life."

## XXI.

HIS TEACHINGS (NO. 4). HIS LAST DISCOURSE.

*“Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.”—John xiv: 1.*

IN the Sermon on the Mount, the first didactic discourse of Jesus on record, he dwells especially on the principles of the divine law; he penetrates into and unfolds the profound spirituality of that law, in its grasp upon the deepest feelings of the heart; he corrects the superficial views and misconceptions that prevailed respecting it; he dwells on the practical relations it constitutes between man and God, and between man and man under a system of mercy. His exposition of its true nature and obligations remains binding upon men. This is the text of all just commentary; this the guide of all correct thought into its true meaning. But the discourse on which we now enter is of an entirely different character. The subject, the style, the spirit are original and unique. In all history there is nothing like it. One of the most affecting and remarkable discourses before Christianity illumined the world is that of Socrates, as given by Plato, immediately before his judicial execution by the hemlock. That is a sublime human composition, but when you compare it with this, you say at once, that is affecting, heroic, sublime; this is infinitely above all heroism; it is divine. To justify this esti-

mate, let me indicate, for there is time only to indicate, some of its characteristics and objects. My first two remarks, while they are essential to the understanding of this discourse, are yet chiefly preliminary to the main subject. First, then, you notice that Jesus is here addressing his disciples and not the world outside. Nor is it the entire body of his followers, but a select few, to whom he speaks. It is only his most intimate friends, the eleven faithful ones, who had long shared his secret counsels; the friends who were to be the standard-bearers of his truth; who were to be the chosen depositaries of his gospel, who were hereafter to unfold that gospel, on which his church was to be built, as on a rock foundation, against which the gates of hell could not prevail. These dear, these loving friends who for the three years of that divine life had shared his trials and walked with him amidst the perils of his course, had eaten with him and slept at his side and witnessed the manifestations of his secret life and his wonderful words and works, are now with him. To them he speaks; he opens his heart; he clears up the mysteries of his life, and with inexpressible tenderness and love reveals himself and his future. This fact gives a peculiar character to his words; this gives it a peculiar character for all time. It is only the real Christian, the man in deepest sympathy with Christ himself, that can enter into and fully appreciate the divine loveliness, sweetness and living power of this discourse. To such, in all ages, it has been a storehouse full of the manifestations of divine love. To such, in all hours of trial, despondency and sorrow, it is a heavenly voice speaking unutterable consolation.

Second. You will notice that this is the *last* discourse of Jesus to his disciples. "Hereafter," he says, "I will not talk much with you." The paschal lamb had been eaten for the last time; on the morrow the veil in the temple will be rent asunder, and the whole Mosaic system, of which this formed a significant part, will be abrogated forever. The Lord's Supper had been instituted to commemorate his death in all future time. The traitor, Judas, had left to consummate his horrible work. In a few hours Jesus would be arrested, tried, and crucified. This final discourse is delivered just as he is entering the blackness of darkness in the very twilight of that sad eclipse which soon darkened heaven and earth. It is this near prospect of death, the conclusion of his earthly career, that gives to these final words their remarkable character and profound significance. Even yet the disciples can not realize that he must die. He reclines with them in all the fullness of health; he has all power in heaven and earth; he has passed unscathed through the midst of his enraged enemies; he has stilled the forces of nature and raised the dead; he has again and again told them he must die. They saw his sadness in view of his betrayal by Judas; they had partaken of the bread which spake of his coming agony and the cup which symbolized the New Testament sealed in his blood. And still they can not surrender the expectation that he is to set up a visible kingdom and reign as king over the house of Israel. To-morrow their sun shall be eclipsed; to-morrow the most dreadful scene in all history will be enacted; to-morrow their false expectations shall be quenched in blood; to-morrow their faith shall pass into a night illumined

by no star, no solitary ray of light. Fatherless, motherless, forsaken by men, and seemingly by Jesus and his Father, nothing but faith in his words and his deeds can possibly sustain them. Ah! never since faith was first born in the human soul has it had to stand such a shock, to live and breathe with mountains piled on it, to stand against the universe in arms. Jesus knew it all; the shock, the quivering blow, the fearful strain, the despairing sorrow, the dense, black night around these young children of his love. The coming hour would task an angel's strength, and they were yet but infants in knowledge and faith. No sound of harpers harping upon their harps the praise of the Redeemer; no angel voices, as at Bethlehem, praising God, would fall upon their ears. The maddened cry, "Crucify him, crucify him," the fearful roll and upheaving of the earthquake, the unnatural darkness at mid-day, these stunned the ear and appalled the eye. Deep in his heart Jesus saw it, felt it all. This is the key of this wonderful discourse. A low, sad, minor strain runs through it from beginning to end. An inexpressible sweetness, tenderness, and love wells up from the heart of the Redeemer. Yet amidst all this there are the deep, base tones of triumph. Prophetic strains of after-glory, the not far distant scenes of struggles issuing in victory, the gleaming turrets of the New Jerusalem and visions of the unspeakable grandeur of the coming kingdom are here, like full-arched rainbows depicted on the malignant blackness of the retiring storm-cloud. Thus, as he enters with his disciples into the coming agony, he speaks these final words. These thoughts are preliminary. We come now to the main discussion. The ob-

ject of this discourse is purely personal. It is to inspire faith in *Him* as their divine Redeemer, in connection with this, and flowing out of it, to open the source of guidance, consolation, and hope in the future. *The main object is to inspire faith in him as the divine Redeemer.* Everything connected with their future course and the establishment of his kingdom harmonizes with this and follows from it. The words of Jesus are clear and full. As his ambassador I shall only echo those words, with the same intent of establishing and increasing the faith of those who already believe, and leading others to receive him as their Redeemer. May the divine Spirit *He* promised guide you and me in this discussion.

I begin at once with his opening words: "Let not your hearts be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in me." The first sentence indicates his deep solicitude for them, and forecasts what is to come. The occasion, the necessity for faith is at hand. Let not your heart be troubled. They are to be scattered, and leave him alone. In the establishment and progress of his kingdom the world will rise in arms against them; days of darkness are before them; the malice of men and devils will wreak their vengeance upon them. The sword, the faggot, the rack are full in his view. Herod and Pilate and Caiaphas, the state and the nominal church combine their forces against both the Master and the servant. They shall be hunted to death under the pretense of doing God service. His coming will be the signal for unsheathing the sword against his disciples. He foresaw it; he foretells it; and in view of it he summons them to endure it under the inspiration of faith in him. "Ye believe in God;

believe also in me." But what faith is this he challenges? Is it faith in him as a mere human teacher, a mere prophet, as ye believe in Isaiah, as by-and-by ye will believe in each other when the inspiration of God rests upon you? I answer: *No, no*; and the whole tenor and words of this discourse answers: *No!* The moment the mere prophet dies his personal relations cease. His words are God's words; his person is no more to us than those of Abraham or any other departed soul; he sinks into the common mass of humanity; he was for a moment the instrument through whom God spake, and he dies, the harp-strings are broken, its tones alone remain. Such a view of faith in Jesus is not only meager, and utterly insufficient; it stands in absolute, bold contrast to the whole of Christ's life and words. We must rise heaven high above this. Believe in God; believe in me. Believe in me *as* ye believe in God. Believe in me as one who himself exercises divine attributes; who is the source of inspiration; who knows all things and has all power; who is one with the Father; who, as your divine Redeemer, ever lives to sustain, to bless, to guide you, and who will in the end receive you to himself. *Believe in me.* This is the sublime faith in *Him* personally which he asks for and seeks to inspire in their souls; this is the faith which is to lift them above fear and give them the victory over the world; this is the faith which in all coming generations is to be the inspiration, the joy, the peace, the hope, the final triumph of his people.

Now see how, as we advance from point to point of this discourse, this view of Christ as our personal divine Redeemer, to be appropriated by a living faith,

comes out, until the whole heaven of thought is lit up by it, and the apostles—no longer doubtful—exclaim, “We know, we believe!” Look now first at the 2d and 3d verses. “In my Father’s house there are many mansions, and I go to prepare a place, and I will come again and receive you unto myself.” Who is this calls God his own Father? Who is this who knows the whole world of light and glory? Who is this armed with power to appoint and secure positions of holy blessedness among the heavenly hosts for his disciples? Who is this who passes with infinite ease from earth to heaven, and heaven to earth? Who is this who assumes to lift upward and take *to himself* as his own these children of God here on earth? And you answer, and the whole Church answers, with one voice: He is the divine, the only begotten Son, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords! Overleaping the limitations of time and sense, lifting the veil that hides the future life, he opens wide the gates of heaven, and pledges himself to give those sorrowing ones a dwelling-place, a mansion in light, where he is to be with them, their ever-living Redeemer. There are to be clouds and darkness and storms on earth; all the billows of human wrath shall roll over them; in his service they shall fight here the good fight of faith; but when the hour shall come, then he will receive their souls to his eternal home. In the blessed confidence of this faith they lived, they toiled, they preached, they endured, they died, they triumphed; in this faith Stephen led the hosts of God’s elect up the terrible steeps of martyrdom, crying, as he ascended, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit;” and Paul, called by the same divine voice to preach his gospel to the Gentiles, after toils and trials

and persecutions, gives utterance to the same holy faith in this same divine Redeemer: "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the *faith*; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will give me in that day." This promise of endless life given and secured by the divine Redeemer is the infinite assurance of his divine purpose to crown those sad ones with light and glory in the world to come.

Pass on now to another point. Read the verses from the 4th to the 12th in this same 14th chapter. Jesus had said, "Whither I go ye know, and the way ye know." Thomas, who was a natural skeptic, questions, and Philip seconds him. Then Jesus breaks forth in those wonderful words: "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by me." Sublime declaration! Summing up in the personal Redeemer the essential attributes of humanity and divinity. The mediatorship between God the sovereign and man the sinner; the truth concerning God's infinite nature and plans and purpose, and man's dependent, fallen state and future; the originator, the giver of life, are all in those words, are all in Christ himself. What prophet, what angel, what archangel, what created being dare utter in presence of the all-seeing Jehovah such assumptions as these? But he stops not here; he ascends, he surmounts, he stands upon the awful height of direct equality with, yea, of perfect oneness with the Father. "He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father," and "I am in the Father and the Father in me." We should hold our breath, we should be stricken with amazement and horror, were we to hear a mere creature of yesterday, the most

enlightened, the most holy, uttering such fearful words! But we feel no such horror, we tremble with no such amazement, when Jesus declares that he and the Father are one. We wonder not when John says he was with God and was God; when Paul says, "he is the brightness of the Father's glory and the express image of his person." Come hither, ye profane critics, and tell us how to see a man is to see the Father; how such a man is in the Father and the Father is in him? But he stops not here; it is the Father, the divine in him that does the mighty works; it is not man, nor mere inspiration that works thus; the divinity dwelling in him, his higher nature is thus all mighty; nay, more; *He*, this Son of God, gives them the pledge, that if they will *believe in him*, he will empower them to do greater works than these miracles. They did believe in him personally as the divine Redeemer, and what followed—a gospel preached to millions, believed by millions; His kingdom established on earth; spreading over the world; the mightiest revolution in society, the overthrow of the grandest and most impregnable systems of religion; millions and millions bowing the knee and owning him their divine God. These were the greater works he pledged himself to enable them to perform, when he had ascended. He stands forth to-day not only as one with the Father, but as the personal, life-giving power, that imparted to those believing on him all their supernatural success.

Ascend now another stage up this mount of light, and see this same truth illustrated in still another manner. Open to the 15th chapter and read, "I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. . . I am the vine, and ye are the branches; he that abideth

in me and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without me, or severed from me, ye can do nothing." The figure is beautiful; the thought original, vital, divine. Christ personally is the living source of all life and faithfulness in the hearts of his disciples. Faith in and love for him unites them to him. Without these, severed from him, their power is gone. They sink into the mass of human corruption and death. Think where this places Jesus. To-day, as you pass round the world, what millions believe in, love, and adore him. But Christ is unseen; Christ is in heaven; yet Christ abides in them all; Christ gives life to all; Christ gives fruitfulness to all. Yonder is a poor soul, just emerging from the night and corruption of our common depravity, and he cries, Jesus, I believe; Jesus, I love thee; and he responds, I am thine, and thou shalt live and bring fruit to glorify my Father; and straightway a new life is in that soul; hope inspires it, and forth it goes to live and work for Jesus. Multiply these souls; Christ is the same sun to all—the same life and salvation to all in every part of this world. This is no fiction of the imagination; no assumption of theorists. It is a fact of experience, known and felt by and in unnumbered souls all over the earth. Who, then, is this wonderful being thus *personally* allied to them and they to him by faith, into whom he ever pours the sign of a new life, and so they bear divine fruits of love and prayer, and confidence, and hope, and the sweet graces of the Christian life?

And now we come to another point of special significance in this discourse. In the xiv: 13, 14, Jesus says, whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I

do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask anything in my name, I will do it. And in the xvi : 23, 24, he repeats the promise in another form : “ Verily, verily, I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you. Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name ; ask and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.” The name of an individual represents his person, character, and work. All that he is, all that he has of influence and power and merit is in his *name*. The name stands for the person. You may go to the bank with a note signed by yourself ; you may be poor and without character ; your note is rejected. But if you have the indorsement of a man of high standing, of great pecuniary ability, and present that, you prevail, your note is accepted. You stand there now in the person, and, so far as that act is concerned, clothed with all the character and influence of your indorser. To refuse to discount your note, provided the bank was in a position to do it, would be to dishonor not only you but your indorser. And when you pray to God in the name of Christ, you come to the throne clothed with all his power and influence ; whatever he is, whatever he has done for your salvation, you present as the reason for the answer to your prayer. Think now what a wonderful and glorious thought this is. A race has fallen, has sinned against its sovereign, deserves his condemnation. It is poor, it is condemned, it is hastening to retribution. But Jesus appears ; he says, believe on me as your Redeemer, take my name with you in faith to the throne of justice, and you shall receive mercy, your prayers shall be answered. All that I am, all that I

have done to redeem men, will stand for you. Oh! what a being is this, whose very name opens the treasures of heaven, and while he pleads that name, be he the poorest, the most worthless of the sons of Adam, he shall receive from the Father all he needs for his spiritual life here, and life everlasting beyond the grave.

Just here there are two thoughts to which I call your attention. In one of these passages the Savior says, whatsoever ye ask in my name *I* will do it; and in another, whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, *he* will do it. So complete is the unity of purpose and harmony of action between the Father and the Son. But for all this, there is a clear and well-defined difference in office and function between them. And so Jesus says in this very discourse, my Father is greater than I. The President and Vice-President of the United States have both the same human nature, and the one may be essentially as able as the other; but one is greater in office than the other. And so in the economy of redemption, the Father is said to send, the Son to obey. He humbles himself from his official equality, he assumes our nature, he suffers on the cross. In our nature, He is the Redeemer, the Mediator between God and man. In that nature he prays and the Father answers. In that nature he intercedes and the Father accepts. In that character, as Redeemer, he receives all power, all knowledge, all gifts necessary to quicken souls, and carry on his work as the Captain of Salvation in bringing many souls to glory. And thus the Divine Trinity harmonizes in the oneness of an essential nature and the difference of official functions in the salvation of men. Mysterious it may be in some

respects, as God's nature is necessarily mystery to man. Mysterious it may be, but so is the union and diverse action of soul and body and life everywhere in all creation. But the facts are plain enough for our faith, and what lies beyond no man is required to believe.

A second thought here. "Hitherto," says Jesus, "have ye asked nothing in my name." Why not? One answer might be, because Jesus himself was with them. The bridegroom was present, and he was all powerful to instruct and guide, protect and sustain them. But I apprehend the true answer is more profound and universal. The name of Jesus expressed his person and work as the Redeemer. Before that person was understood and that work was accomplished, the disciples could not in true faith come to God by him as the accepted Mediator. Hitherto they were under instruction in reference to this very subject. So when Christ taught them how to pray he did not add to that prayer, for my name's sake. They knew, as did all the prophets and holy men in the past, that without the shedding of blood there was no remission of sins. But where, how, by whom the wondrous sacrifice was to be offered, was all mystery. They prayed as all the pious prayed in ages past, believing in God's mercy, yet knowing not the ground of redemption on which mercy rested. But now the day dawned; to-morrow the Jesus, the sacrifice would be offered; the work of redemption in the life and death of the Son of God would be accomplished. The shadows would flee away; the altars would be overturned; Jesus Christ himself would be manifested the Redeemer of men. Then, with an intelligent faith, they could lay hold of *him* as the true Mediator. Then his

infinite merits, his divine and human nature, his work as the Lamb of God, slain in vision from the foundation of the world, would stand forth in the sunlight. Then they could pray in his name; for that name represented the divine Son incarnate, the accepted intercessor, the offered sacrifice. And now that Jesus has lived, has died, has been made known to men as the medium of access to God, every hearer of the gospel is bound and privileged to come to God in his name. Yea! it is the sheerest unbelief, the madness of skepticism, for a man who knows of Jesus in this his glorious character, to put him away and come to God in the positive rejection of his own appointed method of salvation and hope to be answered and saved. Jesus is the Redeemer. There is none other name by which we can be saved. Wonderful being, loving us, dying for us, standing in our stead before the throne. To thee angels and archangels give praise and honor. In thee the redeemed in heaven and the believers on earth ever trust, and in thy name alone we come to the mercy-seat for pardon and grace to help in every hour of need.

Time permits me to mention only one other point in this discourse, but this is a point of vast importance. Turn to John xiv, 16, 17: "I will pray the Father, he shall give you another comforter—paraclete—that he may abide with you forever, even the Spirit of Truth—Hebraism for the spirit that reveals truth—whom the world can not receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him; but ye know him, for he dwelleth in you and shall be with you." John xvi, 7, 8, 9, 10: "If I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him

unto you." The existence of the Holy Ghost, the third person in the Trinity, is a fact wholly of revelation. He is not visible; he is manifest only to us in his influence. The world do not receive him, but Christians know his power and rejoice in his presence. This divine spirit has his place and work in the plan of redemption. Jesus is about to ascend to his Father, but this other paraclete is to come and dwell in his people forever. His office work is threefold; first, with reference to Christ's immediate disciples, he was the revealer—Jesus had instructed and opened truth to their minds; but their minds were weak, their memories treacherous. This Holy Spirit comes to bring to mind his words, to strengthen memory, to fill them with the truth thus spoken in all its vividness and power, and open the true meaning of what was obscure and dark. Nor is this all. There were many things Jesus had for them, which they could not bear, were not able to receive, before his departure. These the Spirit should make known to them; these things to come he should unfold to them. This promise is the foundation on which the whole New Testament rests as the inspired truth of God. They spake, they wrote the things pertaining to Christ and his kingdom, as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. And so his first office in this kingdom of Christ is *the Revealer*.

The second is that of the convicter and regenerator. He is to convince the world of sin, of righteousness, of judgment; and as he convinces and convicts he is to renew and lead them to Jesus. On the day of Pentecost he first demonstrated this divine power; thousands were pricked in their hearts; thousands believed in Jesus. Ever since that time his presence has been

revealed in conviction and conversion. Religion advances; Jesus is received; the gospel is victorious only as he brings the truth home to dead hearts of men. Yes, what power would there be in the cross, what efficacy in the gospel, if the Holy Ghost enters not the soul and moves it not heavenward? Men come and go, listen and forget, purpose and fail to execute, move stupidly down the broad road, deaf to the voices alike of Sinai and Calvary. We preach, we plead; in vain, in vain, till he enters the strong man's citadel and compels him to cry for mercy. This is our hope, our trust, that Jesus, as we pray in faith, will send this spirit to convince all of you who are yet in bondage to sin, of your fearful ruin, and turn your feet to Calvary. This is his second office—the convicter, the regenerator.

The third is that of the quickener, guide, and comforter. To the soul once penitent and believing, this blessed Spirit comes and quickens it to see and feel the fullness, and richness, and power of the truth as it is in Jesus; stimulates it to sacrifice and labor, excites to prayer, strengthens against temptation, supports and comforts amidst trial, sorrow, and death. Jesus is in heaven; but he sends this divine Spirit to work in his church and through its members, as if you could see his form and hear his voice and feel his transforming power. This is his great promise, and this completes the cycle of redemption. The Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, each in their office ministering life and salvation to the world.

I have just touched on some of the prominent thoughts in this glorious discourse. Every part of it overflows with heavenly richness, for every part of it

is full of Christ. He is the center, and every utterance reveals the cordial, intimate, and vital relation of the disciples to him as their Redeemer. To excite their faith, their love, their hope and joy he here unbosoms all his heart; and when he had reached the end, from one, from all, came the declaration, "Now we are sure thou knowest all things;" by "this we believe thou camest forth from God." Then followed that more than seraphic prayer, for which language has no expression able to express its mingled tenderness, love, compassion, grandeur, and divine yearnings to his beloved disciples. And then his discourse is ended; they go forth to Gethsemane and the heavens darken over the terrible scenes of Calvary.

And now, O fellow Christian, what thinkest thou of Jesus? I confess that often, as I study his wonderful words, my soul is melted by the tenderness, overwhelmed by the love, the sublimity of the infinite greatness of Jesus. I know and you know that he is our Redeemer. All I can say is, I am a poor sinner, and Jesus is my all in all.

And ye who listen here to-night so attentively, who yet have never taken him to your heart, what think ye of Jesus? Is he to you now the living, suffering, atoning, almighty, and only begotten Son of God? Have you no part in him? Are these words not for you? O, can you leave this house unmelted, unbelieving? Can you turn away from the place where Christians pray in the name of Jesus? Think what it is to have no Savior! What it is to go with all your sins upon you to the judgment-seat!

## XXII.

THE LAST SCENES—HIS AGONY AND HIS TRIAL.

“*Sit ye here while I go and pray yonder.*”—Matthew xxvi: 36.

“*Let him be crucified.*”—Matthew xxvii: 23.

THE portions of the life of Christ on which we are to dwell to-night are of the deepest interest. But as they are often dwelt upon in preaching, it is my purpose only to notice a few salient points which mark these closing scenes and set them off from those of all others. They are two of the last scenes of his earthly life: the agony in the garden and the trial.

1. The scene in the garden. Two facts preliminary to our discussion of the scene itself are necessary to be mentioned: (1.) Its historical character. It is related by three of the evangelists, not in the same terms, but in substantial agreement with each other. The particulars are given from point to point with great vividness. Just such gardens, according to Josephus, then abounded around Jerusalem. It was a great city, and all the appliances of luxury and wealth encompassed it. The position of this garden beyond the Kedron is given. The position of the disciples, the special nearness of James, and John, and Peter, the agony, and then the arrest, are so given as to bear the marks of their historic truthfulness. There is no myth, no fancy, no creative imagination here. Nor can there

be any motive assigned for misrepresentation. We read a truthful record of a truthful scene. We approach the garden with the deep consciousness that this is a reality and that here our Savior suffered. (2.) It must be remembered, also, that the movements of Jesus were all voluntary. He had come from Galilee of his own accord to be with his disciples. He had partaken with them of the Paschal Lamb, and instituted the Lord's Supper. He had given them, in anticipation of the event of his crucifixion, his last instructions. He had told them of his coming death. Singing a hymn with them, he had resorted with them to this garden of Gethsemane. He had marked the traitor, and Judas had gone to do his horrible work. Even at this time he could have gone elsewhere. He remained here voluntarily to meet his doom. When arrested he had affirmed his power. Legions of angels would have been given him to transport him from their sight. But he tarried there; he went into the arms of his enemies with a clear foresight of the future. In opposition to his will, considered as a man, he would not have been arrested; in opposition to his will, considered as the Son of God, it would have been impossible to have led him away. Remember, then, that through all this account there runs personal design. Nothing is forced; he is not taken unawares; all is foreseen; all his preparations are made, and the end is suffering unto death.

(3.) We come now to the scene. Jesus is alone. Three only of his disciples, the same that were with him on the mount of Transfiguration, are near him. It is an hour of prayer. Watch ye here while I go

and pray yonder. He pours out his soul before the Father. *He* alone understands his case; *he* alone comprehends the cause; from *him* alone he seeks support. It is an hour of most intense agony. He is in great distress; the anguish of his soul forces the sweat through the pores of his skin as if it were great clots of blood falling to the earth. It is an hour of submission. Not my will but thine be done. Thrice he has prayed, and then the angels came down to strengthen him, lest the soul itself should be utterly prostrate, or should part company with the body. Such in outline is the scene; but the imagination is powerless to fill up its parts. Language can not describe it. Experience can alone realize it, and experience is not ours. The circumstances, the sufferer, the agony, all stamp it as mysterious and utterly unaccountable on any merely ordinary theory. I can understand the anguish of the body when he hangs upon the cross; for there is the most exerting physical suffering. The nails, the position, are killing him by inches, torturing life out of him. But here there is no bodily suffering; he is in perfect health; there are no manacles upon him; he is free to go where he will, and if he will to escape the traitor and his murderous band. Why, then, this suffering? I can understand, too, how a mere good man, in view of suffering, or when he thinks upon the ingratitude and evil state and sad prospects of others, may be the subject of melancholy gusts of sorrow; but here is a being pure in himself, self-contained, clear-minded, looking forward and backward with profound intelligence, seeing in God his most loving Father, surrounded by attached disciples, yet suffering the deepest anguish. Tell me, if you can,

the secret of the agony of the garden? His followers, sustained by faith in him, by scores of thousands have rejoiced in the extremest forms of torture. They have been racked and burned, but the inward faith has lifted them above bodily anguish. What element is in him that was not in them? What source of sorrow here that was not there? Think a moment, ye who doubt the divine work of Jesus in Redemption! On your theories, why this position? Why this prayer? Why this inward agony? But when you rise out of this mephitic darkness of the skeptic into the serene light of Christianity, then you understand the occasion and the necessity of the suffering, although you can not here fully comprehend the suffering itself. Jesus began his redemptive work when, veiling the divine glory aside, he took upon him our nature. In his life of temptation, poverty, sorrow, not only his personal righteousness, but this redemptive work was in it all. In every act, in every word, in every deed, this is present. And now the end is quite near. Redemption has been advancing, step by step, through all his illustrious life. One thing remains; the bearing sin in his own body; the curse falling upon him in all its malignity; the agony, the trial, the crucifixion. These three are all as one. A few hours in time binds them together. The Master of the world begins his march to Calvary from the garden. The amazing work he is performing rests with all its weight upon his human soul. Sin is suffering; he is bearing sin; he is tortured with suffering. Start not, unbeliever, when I say it, he is beginning to drink in its bitterness the cup of the "wrath of God!" Redemption is the vindication of justice through

suffering. The burden an angel could not bear, is on him. His soul comes into contact with the fearful deserts of a world's sin. He sees, he feels, he suffers, he sinks. My Father! let this cup pass from me, is forced upon him; then, rising above the pain, he humbly says, "Not my will, but thine be done." For this is not all; this is the beginning of the end; the trial, the cross, is all before him; the anticipation mingles with and intensifies the present agony. Sin in its dreadful nature is brought home to his soul as it never has been to the living or the dead.. There is an intensity of meaning in the prophet's words, "he bare our sins." It is not the sin of one; it is the sin of humanity. This marks this hour; this sets it off from all our sufferings; this furnishes the occasion for his agony; this is its reason; this its explanation; and without this idea it is impossible satisfactorily to account for this scene in the garden of Gethsemane; it remains the puzzle of history to the unbelieving world, until that world comes into sympathy with God in respect to sin and wrath. Such, in brief, is Gethsemane.

We pass now to the arrest and trial. Rising from his place of prayer and suffering, Christ is aware of the approach of those sent to take him. Summoning his disciples, he waits not for their entrance into the garden; moving forward to meet them, he inquires whom they seek? Impressed by his calm majesty, they recoil. Then Judas attempts to kiss him, and receives the answer: "Betrayest thou the Son of Man with a kiss?" For a kiss is the symbol of friendship, of confidence, of peace, and the traitor seeks to veil his murderous intent under the cover of affection. The

character of this man stands forth as the embodiment of avarice, of dishonored affection, and the most fearful crime. His presence among the disciples is the voucher for the historical truthfulness of the narrative of the life of Christ. It was an essential link in that chain of events which led on to his crucifixion. If there was wrong, deception, evil of any kind in this course, he would have detected and unfolded it. Instead of this Christ detected and unfolded him in his true character. He furnishes, for he can not furnish the Sanhedrim, with any just ground of condemnation. He is immortal; but it is an immortality of infamy. His fearful remorse when the sad consequences of his crime enforced and illustrated its evil; his restoration of the blood-money; his wretched suicide, can not redeem him from the abhorrence and the contempt of mankind. "It were better for him never to have been born," are the fearful words of Jesus. The apostate is doomed. Apostacy from the right and the true is damned. Apostacy for money is damnable; apostacy from Jesus and his love and light, when he seeks to save the soul, is doubly damned. He who, with God's word in his hands, and God's people as his brethren, tramples the one in the earth and scoffs at and wounds the other as if they were felons, has already deserved deep perdition; but he who, enrolling himself among the personal disciples of Jesus, and sitting under his light and enjoying the familiar acquaintance of a disciple, for a little money, betrays his Lord, where in this universe shall he dwell, and what in the great hereafter shall be his reward?

I need not now speak to you of the hasty Peter and his sword; of the miraculous deed of Christ in heal-

ing the severed ear and saving his disciple from after vengeance; nor of the dispersion of the eleven and the surrender of the Savior to his enemies. They conduct him to the house of Annas, the former high-priest, and the father-in-law of Caiaphas, the present high-priest. It is still night, but the conspirators are present waiting for the result of the attempted arrest. Through the dark streets of Jerusalem, as if he had been a vile felon, the blessed Savior is led in the profoundest secrecy to this man's house. Jerusalem is filled with myriads from the towns of Palestine, attending the passover. But Jerusalem knows not that her king is brought as a captive through her sleeping multitude. Here they consult, they condemn in anticipation. But the ecclesiastical trial could not take place except before the regular assembly of the Sanhedrim, and this could not be until the morning. Time passes swiftly. The hum of an uprising population meets the ear when Jesus is taken to the house of Caiaphas and stands on trial before the great assembly. By this time it begins to be noised abroad; Jesus Christ is taken, arrested as a malefactor. His trial proceeds; the witnesses fail; put upon his oath, he acknowledges that he is Messiah. He is condemned; he has been condemned in anticipation before his arrest. Caiaphas had declared that he should die for the sins of the people. But the Jew had not the power of execution. Rome lifted her eagles in Jerusalem. Other penalties they might inflict, but *death* the Roman held as the sign of his dominion. We pass, then, to the hall of judgment, the court-room of the Roman Pilate. The procession thither is augmented as the news of the arrest has flown through the city.

The priests, the Pharisees, the multitude attend the Saviour. Before the bar of Rome it will not do to plead against Christ the violation of some Jewish ecclesiastical law. With this Pilate will have nothing to do. They raise, therefore, another charge, utterly false—they accuse Jesus of aiming at civil power. This charge a few words respecting the purely religious nature of his kingdom disproves, and Pilate is convinced. But the Jews are now clamorous against him as a disturber of the public peace. Pilate, hearing that he is a Galileean, and knowing that Herod, the tetrarch of that country, is in the city, adroitly seeks to stay the further trial in his court by transferring him to that of this prince. Thither he is conducted; but Herod fails to condemn him, and, after mockery and contempt, sends him back to Pilate. And now commences the struggle in this weak, treacherous, and cruel ruler and his conscience and judgment. He is convinced that Christ is innocent; but how shall he satisfy the Jews? His wife warns him against the crime he is urged to commit. He seeks to avoid it, by offering to release Jesus instead of the murderer Barabbas, according to custom at that feast. The Jews claim Barabbas. Again he is thwarted. But what shall he do with Jesus? Crucify him! crucify him!! resounds on every side. Still he declares Jesus innocent; he may save him yet. Then the crafty Pharisees, knowing their man, ply him with a final and effective argument. "If thou let this man go, thou art not Cæsar's friend." Oh! anything but that. Cæsar is Pilate's God, his authority, his power, his life. To win the favor, to shun the disgrace of Cæsar, he will dye his hands in blood. In vain he washes

his hands in token of his innocence. Jesus is delivered to be scourged and crucified. The just is given to the cross; the murderer Barabbas is restored to the people; and Pilate thinks himself safe. We shall see, after a little, the end.

This trial, the most remarkable in history, has and always will attract to itself the deepest interest of the world. The arrested one is the Savior of the world, and the circumstances following it are the most momentous. (1.) You notice here that it is carried through with the most indecent haste. The arrest is made at night, upon an unresisting man, who appeared daily in the temple, and mingled freely with the people. He is hurried to the house of Annas, and undergoes a preliminary and illegal examination; he is then, as soon as it can be convened, hurried to the Sanhedrim; then he is taken to Pilate; from Pilate he is led to Herod; back again he is brought to Pilate; there condemned, he is instantly led to crucifixion. Why such haste? Was the city in danger? Did the public good require it? The only answer is, No! Cicero, when consul, assembled the Senate of Rome in secret session; they tried and condemned the conspirators of Cataline; they were arrested and destroyed. He was accused and condemned afterward for the execution of Roman citizens without a fair, open trial. What was his plea in answer? The republic itself was in danger; these villains had planned its overthrow, and with it wholesale butchery and robbery. Their plans were ripe; they were numerous and strong; and if not instantly taken and destroyed, they would have succeeded. What have we here? A guileless man, a religious prophet, a holy teacher, a respecer of

law, a sublime lover of men. No act, no thought hostile to the state appears in his life. Yet he is secretly arrested; hurried from tribunal to tribunal, alone, friendless, condemned and executed.

You will notice next the fact that he is condemned while guiltless. In answer to the adjuration of the high priest, after their witnesses had failed to convict him of anything criminal, "to tell them whether he was the Christ, the Son of the living God," he utters the words, "Thou hast said; nevertheless, I say unto you: Hereafter shall ye see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power and coming in the clouds of heaven." On this the high priest accuses him of blasphemy, and they condemn him as worthy of death. But this is not to try him; this is just to obtain some confession on which to base a foregone conclusion. It was their duty then to see whether or not his confession was true. What are the signs of the Messiahship? What the proofs that he is the Son of God? What has he done to prove these stupendous assumptions to be real? There is nothing of all this; they are seeking to condemn, not to know the truth. It is of no consequence that their own scriptures announced the coming of just such a being; it is nothing that he has wrought the most manifest miracles and spoken the most wonderful words. It is enough to know that he claims to be the Messiah; he is worthy of death. And so this whole trial turns out to be a mockery of justice, a travesty of judicial proceedings. He is the Messiah; he is the Son of God; the words he utters are true; but because they are true, he must die. Before Herod and Pilate there is not given a particle of evidence of crime. Pilate himself declares

his innocence in the most emphatic manner. Roman judgment is convinced of his innocence, but Roman ambition yields to Jewish injustice. O! in that hour Jerusalem and Rome were weighed and found wanting; in that hour they sealed their doom.

Look now at the principal personage in this scene. Exhausted by the night's watching, by the last instructions to his disciples, by the fearful agony of the garden, he moves before us, outwardly calm, unresisting, sublime in his reticence and in his words. He meets his enemies at the arrest so calmly that they are amazed; he heals the ear of Malchus, when they are bent on taking his life; he looks searchingly on Peter after his denial; he answers not before the illegal tribunal of Annas; but his words, when under oath before Caiaphas and Pilate, are memorable, sublime, such that the world never will forget them. There he stands, now before the Sanhedrim, now before Pilate, before Herod, amidst the brutal soldiery, as they scourge and crown and robe him, amidst the fierce populace thronging around him—the same serene, unresisting Son of God; for he was to be led as a lamb to the slaughter; and, as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so opened he not his mouth. In all that scene of trial there is no word, no act unbecoming the lowly Lamb of God; there is everything to justify the word of Rousseau, that if Socrates died like a philosopher, Jesus died like a God!

Look now at the actors in this scene. The Jew first arrests our attention; for he it was on whom rests the original guilt of this transaction; it was to him the Redeemer came as the Savior; it was to him those words of life and love had been originally spoken; it

was in his villages and cities he had wrought such unparalleled exhibitions of super-angelic power in healing thousands of his diseased and dying; it was for him, at first, that incarnate Son had been revealed in his all-perfect life; in his hands were those Holy Scriptures, they described the suffering and the all-glorious Messiah; and it was his rejection of this Christ that culminated in the cry, "Crucify him." His answer to Pilate, "We have no king but Cæsar," was a lie flaunted forth before the world. At that hour his heart burned with a fanatical hatred of Rome; he had a king supreme above Cæsar; he longed and hoped for the coming of his representative, in the person of Messiah, who should take the civil scepter and expel the usurper from his throne, and set up the kingdom of Israel in its pristine glory. Had Jesus lent himself to such a purpose, he would have carried him in his arms and shouted his hosannas. But when he denied Christ, he took to his bosom an assassin and a murderer. From that hour he reaped as he had sown; murder, assassination, intestine war, open revolt, marched through the land, and flooded his cities with blood. Peace, quiet he knew no more. He ripened in every attribute of evil, until the legions of Rome trode him down beneath their iron heel; the temple lay in ruins, and the remnant of the people, escaped from the edge of the sword, were sent forth as the monuments of divine wrath to fulfill his prophetic words, in their dispersion over the earth. To-day men point to the Jew as prophecy fulfilled; to-day this fated and trodden people exist—exist, after eighteen centuries of plague and war, and racks and fire, and disabilities—exist still, distinct from all nations. They

have drunk the cup even to its dregs; but there is to dawn—is dawning—a brighter day; the day of the fuller gathering in of the Gentiles, when this long-cursed people shall come forth, no more to shout, “Crucify him,” but with a penitent heart and streaming eyes, to cry, “My Lord, and my God.” The past is seen, is known; the Messiah they have longed and hoped for is He, the crucified one; and when this fact dawns upon them, then to Him shall the gathering of the people be. Hasten, oh Lord, that hour of gladness; that hour when Jew and Gentile, no longer Jew and Gentile, shall, with one voice, crown Jesus as their king.

Turn now to the other prominent actor in this scene, the representative of Rome. Pilate was probably no better and no worse than the majority of the Roman governors. He was not so intensely cruel as some imagine him; he was simply selfish, and unwilling to hazard his interest with Tiberius by a clemency or an act of justice that might be interpreted against him. He did not possess the principle that vindicates the right against all opposing circumstances. He was not a Cato. He lived on the breath of royal favor; to lose that favor was to him political damnation. To retain it, the clamors of the multitude sounded louder than the still voice of justice. It is hardly possible to read the history of this transaction without being convinced that he was deeply interested in the Savior, and most favorably impressed, if not awed, by his presence. The admonition of his wife added to these personal convictions. The struggle between right and wrong reveals itself in his efforts to save the Redeemer. But the lust of power, the fear of the loss

of the royal favor, the persistent cries of the Jews, at length overcame all his better intentions. The ceremony of washing his hands was a pitiful device to avoid the guilt of his act. He, and he alone, held the power of life or death in his hands. God and the emperor held him responsible. He, too, reaped as he sowed. His administration was disturbed by revolt. He was accused before the emperor. He returned to Rome to find him dead and Caius on the throne. Tradition is unanimous that he suffered misfortunes, and sought to rid himself of them by self-destruction. Two traditions were early current respecting his death. One of these is that he was banished to Vienne on the Rhone, where a singular monument, a pyramid on a quadrangular base fifty-two feet high, is called Pilate's tomb. The other is that he resorted to a mountain by Lake Luzerne, now called Mt. Pilatus; that, after spending years in its recesses in remorse and despair rather than penitence, he plunged into the waters of the lake on its summit. So speaks tradition; how true or how far false we know not. That it has an essential element of truth is most probable, and that truth is that he suffered under the just judgment of God even in this world. He died, but Christ and Christianity lived. Rome had reached its highest imperial glory; step by step it descended, and as it descended, Christianity spread. It became the mightiest power of earth, and then Rome fell, as Jerusalem had fallen, the curse of God resting upon them both.

Our subject supplies a threefold lesson. The first is that national injustice and national corruption will inevitably conduct to national retribution, or to decay

and extinction. History, even down to our own times, is full of illustrations ; but the nation most prominent in this scene stands out to-day as a monument both of national injustice and national ruin. Our nation is to live as a free nation only by a virtuous intelligence ; and a virtuous intelligence can only be gained by the universal education of our youth in the principles of divine authority and truth, which alone can supply virtue to the individual and the nation, and the only book that establishes these principles on a just and immovable foundation is the *Word of God*. And when men seek to cast out of our schools the only book that proclaims the authority of the State and furnishes the principle on which that authority securely rests among a free people, and supplies the only principles that can make men virtuous citizens, peaceful and law-loving citizens, it seems to me they have taken a long stride toward the demoralization of our youth and the destruction of our free institutions ; and however they may seek to remedy their fault by aiding directly religious institutions, it is clear to me they do but pull down with one hand while they seek to build up with the other—they sap the very foundations of all true authority, and leave the State without a single prop in its own institutions with which to sustain its own weight or vindicate its own integrity. What else does the State rest on but the divine authority, and if it casts loose from the word of God, where else is it to obtain that without which it falls lifeless ?

There is here a further lesson for politicians and statesmen. They are set up to promote the good of the people. If they commit injustice and send forth an evil example, they not only insult the majesty of

the people, they contribute to the demoralization of the nation and insult the majesty of God. He who, without full right, on vain and frivolous pretenses, by corrupt bargains for place, by unjust contracts, by any evil device, abstracts from the public treasury that which does not rightly belong to him, is as much a thief and a scoundrel as if he thrust his hand into the pockets of his neighbor unlawfully. He may escape momentary detection; he may grow rich on his illicit gains; but the money shall curse him, the brand of Pilate shall be on him, and his restless soul, cursed here, shall only live to ripen for the deeper curse hereafter. It is high time we learned that public wrong is even darker than private wrong; the one directly affects the individual, the other the community—the one is limited, the other almost unlimited. Pilate was a selfish man; the injustice he perpetrated was darkly guilty, as he stood on a high position, and represented the majesty and justice of law. Such men ruined themselves, ruined Rome.

There is here a still further lesson. Jesus Christ is power, is light, is the Savior. Jesus Christ received is Redeemer; Jesus Christ rejected is still a judge. He was on trial before the Jewish nation. His character, illustrated by his holy life, his divine words, and his miracles, was before them. In answer to the high priest he had answered: "Hereafter ye shall see the Son of Man on the right hand of power and coming in the clouds of heaven." What this meant they only partially understood. But what it means, there is no one here present so ignorant as not to know. They had the light, and denied and crucified him. You have the light, and it is for you to say to-night

whether you will accept him as your Savior or cry, "Crucify him!" The end must soon come; the hour when you, like them, must give account is near. Shall he come to you as a condemning or an acquitting judge?

## XXIII.

## THE CRUCIFIXION.

“ *When Jesus, therefore, had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished, and he bowed his head and gave up the ghost.*”—John xix, 30.

WE come now to the *Crucifixion*. This is the great event, the consummation of this wonderful life in his work of atonement for our sins. It is described with some variations by all the evangelists; it is presupposed in all the remaining writings of the New Testament; it is alluded to by profane writers; it is the point on which the whole church of Christ rests its hope of salvation. No sane man, with the least knowledge of history, doubts the fact. Christianity is itself the creation of this death. Without this, it would be as unaccountable as the existence of the world without a creator. The main force of the opposers has therefore been directed to discover some discrepancies or contradictions in the evangelical accounts of the event itself. Their object is, since they can not deny the fact, to eliminate all signs of the supernatural from the accounts given of it by throwing discredit on the sacred writers, and thus reduce the death of Christ to that of an ordinary man. Their object is to show that the evangelists made mistakes, and are not trustworthy witnesses. They beg the question at the start

by denying any such thing as inspiration, a miracle, or a divine sonship, and consequently an atonement for the sins of men. And then, having thus begged the real question, their efforts are given to account for the statements given, either by accounting for these events on natural principles, or by showing that the writers were mistaken, or that they falsified the facts. The result is that they try to make a history of their own, instead of taking that which is given. The effort is not to harmonize diversities of statement, which, from the nature of the case, will arise among different and honest writers, inspired and uninspired, but to exaggerate these diversities into contradictions, just like a special pleader at a trial, who strains every nerve to make honest witnesses false because they saw some things from different points. If, too, one writer mentions one event and another omits it, why the first is wrong; if one, regarding only the whole subject, puts several things together without regard to their order, and another particularizes and brings out the parts more fully in their real sequence, why the one is wrong and the other right, or the one follows this tradition and another that. In all this the animus is clear enough. It is not to clear up difficulties, but to make them, and so to increase them as to dishonor the truthfulness and the inspiration of the evangelists. From these persistent efforts two valuable points have been reached. The first is that no two of them reconstruct the history of early Christianity in the same way. There is no agreement in the results. Every one has his own theory, his own method of supplying deficiencies. One advances this idea and another assails it. The results of their criticism are about equal

to those of a dozen novices in attempting to determine the soundness of a hundred genuine bank bills among which they are suspicious there are many that are not genuine. One throws out this and another that, until, if they continue their efforts, there will none of them be left. They spin the most contradictory ideas out of their own brains, drawing upon their imagination for their facts, and making inferences from the statements before them as unfounded and unwarranted as some of our geologists and naturalists in their efforts to reconstruct the world as God never made it. The man is blind who attempts to follow them, and soon or late, both leader and led will fall into the ditch. Their anchorage is gone, and wind and tide float them here and there. Do not think me over severe. If any person will find four, or even two of these men, who agree in anything on this subject, except in opposition to the supernatural, he will find what no one else has found.

The second point reached is no less valuable. We know how much and how little the most learned and acute of unbelievers can do in their efforts to overturn the faith of Christianity. Some such have always been in the assault. They have come now to the citadel of the faith, to the life of Jesus. Every door, every point of this citadel they have assailed with all their force. The men within have often trembled for its safety. Now and then an honest mind has been led astray. But minds as acute, as powerful have always been found on the defensive. The contest soon proves a hopeless one for the assailants. Truth is against them; Christ is the leader in opposition to them; the wisdom and love of God are against them; and soon the Chris-

tian loses his fears, and stands firmer than ever within and upon the rock of his salvation. A person for the first time reading them, thinks they are certain to win; Christianity is not what it claims; but a little more knowledge of them and their ways, a fuller knowledge of the real nature and force of the Christian faith, drives these foul eagles away, and he sees and knows that this is the everlasting truth. Alas! he exclaims, these men know not what they attempt to do. The life of the world is not to be committed to such hands. The cross is precious, and they wish (but can not) to tear Jesus from the human heart. I say, then, we know what all their skill and force amounts to. A breath of Jesus scatters it to the winds.

We come now to the record. He delivered him to be crucified. In connection with this, Matthew and Mark tell us of the scourging before he was led forth. Luke does not allude to it. But John is more particular, relates the fact that, even after the scourging, Pilate sought again to release him, and held a private conversation with the Savior. This practice of scourging before the final punishment was common among the Romans. In this case, however, the scourging takes place before the condemnation, for the purpose of exciting the compassion of the Jews and saving the Savior. Pilate sees that this final appeal is useless, and surrenders him to death. The incidents that follow are either those which precede every execution, or which are peculiar to this. He went forth bearing his cross. This was a piece of timber about six inches square, some ten feet long, with a cross-piece near the top. There were three forms of the cross. The Greek cross, in which two pieces of wood of equal length

cross each other at less or more than a right angle. Another form was that in which the upright piece has a cross-piece on the top; and the other was that in which this piece is fastened some inches below the top of the main timber. This, according to tradition, was the form of that on which the Savior was nailed. In proceeding to the crucifixion, it was usual for the malefactor to bear his cross. This Jesus did; but, spent with all the fatigues of his fearful night and trial, after a time he sank under its weight. A stranger, Simon, a Cyrenean, passing by and probably stopping to see the procession, the soldiers compel to bear the cross to the place of execution.

It was during this solemn and sad procession that, as Luke tells us, there occurred one of those incidents, which we can hardly read without tears, in view of the future. A vast company follow the victim of injustice. Among them are many of the women from the city. They are not those who had come from Galilee, the special friends of the Savior. They were of those who belonged to the city, or some, perhaps, had come up thither to witness the Paschal solemnities. They can not restrain their feelings; they bewail, they lament for him. It was against the law and custom that a malefactor should be attended by the signs of sorrow that on other occasions of death were exhibited. But their sorrow is irrepressible. It breaks forth in wailing and lamentation. Why was this? Here is no popular hero who has fought for them, now by the hand of tyranny torn from them, and as he passes to execution is cheered by the wild enthusiasm of the masses. The power on the throne has endeavored to save him. Their fathers, their brothers, their hus-

bands, their sons, their priests, their exalted citizens had hardly ceased that cry, crucify him! crucify him! his blood be on us and on our children, which appalled the stern heart of Pilate and overawed his conscience into consent to this deed of blood. They were women. The fanaticism which condemned him had not tainted them. They knew something of his life; for who in Jerusalem was ignorant of it? They with the children had just before, when he entered the city gates, swelled the cry, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord! Hosannah to the Son of David! His holy, his sublime, his gracious, his beautiful life, had touched their hearts. Their hope of the Messiah, their feeling that he was the Messiah, had been deeper, more religious, and profounder than that of multitudes of the men. Their instinctive reason had apprehended, their unselfish hearts had appreciated the sublime, the loving character of Jesus. From the time of the aged Anna in the temple, down to this closing scene, there is not an instance of taunt or reproach towards Jesus from Hebrew women. They ministered to him at Bethany; they broke the alabaster box on his head and wiped his feet with tears; a Roman wife warns her husband not to condemn this holy man; they shed their tears over him in prospect of his execution. There is in this sublime Redeemer something that naturally attracts to him the admiration, nay, the love of the most lovely and loving of our race. And wherever his gospel has been preached, women in larger numbers than men have listened and believed. And now, weak, tottering, calmly passing on to death, they see in him still the

Son of David, and in his coming death their blessed hope. Then, as their lamentations stir his heart, he turns and, in all the dignity of his exalted character, addresses to them words so unique, so prophetic, so sympathizing, that only he could originate them. "Daughters of Jerusalem!" How sweet, how sympathetic, how exalted, how thrilling the words! Lovely in yourselves, more blessed in the possession of such a city, such a nation, such divine oracles, such a wonderful history, and with Miriam and her attendants ye sang when the horse and his rider sank in the sea; extolled in his poverty, ye sang the praises of Jehovah in the strains of David, ye hung your harps upon the willows by the ruins of Babylon; ye strung them again when Jerusalem rose from the dust; hopeful, loving, expectant, ye have waited for me, the Messiah. But now, in my death, ye see the ruin of your city, the fall of your nation, the dispersion of Israel. The glory is departed; the long succession of prophets, the vivid witnesses for God, are gone from you forever. Aye, weep for yourselves! Weep, weep, ye noblest, best, most exalted of this world! The future is coming in all its sadness. Your beauteous temple shall be a ruin; its ever-blazing altars be overturned; a barbarian shall transport away from you as trophies of his victory its most sacred utensils. Aye, weep for yourselves! This city, once the pride and glory of the earth, must witness scenes of sorrow unparalleled in history. Famine, fire, and sword will do their work. Millions shall die in destitution, in lust, in violence, and ye or your children who may survive must go forth robed in sack-cloth, to endure for centuries obloquy and scorn and persecution even unto death. For if on me, the holy,

the true Messiah, your fathers and husbands inflict such woe, what will become of them when, all ripe for judgment, the arsenal of God shall yield up its weapons of vengeance upon those who murder the Son of God. Weep for yourselves! Alas! how swiftly, how terribly was this prophetic voice answered. The veil was rent, the holy of holies desecrated, the temple burned, the city sacked, then destroyed, the people that survived the awful butchery sold into returnless slavery, for centuries none dare enter the rebuilt city, where even now a few sad ones return to weep beside those mighty stones on which once rose the temple of Jehovah. Say what man may, Christ's words were prophecy, and they have been all fulfilled.

We pass on with this motley crowd through the city gates, and we reach a place called Golgotha—the place of a skull. We have three terms for this place: Golgotha, Hebrew; Cranion, Greek; Calvary, Roman—all signifying the same thing, a skull. Two meanings are given to it. The first makes the term stand for the place of the dead, a place of burial, a sort of cemetery, or a place of execution. But the place of crucifixion was in a garden and not a cemetery; it was owned by Joseph, a wealthy member of the Sanhedrim, a senator of their national council. In it there was hewn out of the rock a new tomb, a private tomb in his own possession. It is not probable that the name had any reference to a cemetery or to the skulls of dead men there to be found. This is not impossible, but hardly probable. I prefer the second meaning. The term described the peculiar form of the position. It was an elevation that remarkably resembled the form of a skull.

This application of a name to a place according to its appearance is common enough. Rome is the Seven-hilled City. If this were so, then the position was generally known by this marked peculiarity. It was conspicuous; it was elevated; it was just such a point as a Roman would choose for this bloody work. It was not far from the highway; it was open to all; multitudes might witness it. We sing often of Mt. Calvary. The expression has been criticised as untrue. But if we are right, the name intimates that it was a peculiar elevation in form like a skull, a small mount, a position that gave the vast crowds an opportunity to witness the fearful scene. But the identification of this site is another matter. Three centuries after this occurrence, the present position of the holy sepulcher was chosen, and a church built over it. In regard to this the following facts are to be considered: 1. The crucifixion took place without the walls of the city. This is expressly asserted. But the position of the holy sepulcher is now far within the city. 2. At that time the city had enjoyed much prosperity for many years. Palestine had grown in population, and this all contributed to make the city strong and large. It is asserted in profane history that during the siege of Titus, less than forty years after this event, more than a million of inhabitants and strangers were crowded within its walls. The attempt, therefore, to show that then the walls of the city curved or angled round so conveniently as to bring the site of the Church of the Sepulcher on the outside, encounters at the outset a violent presumption against it. The whole distance from this church to the outer wall of the present

temple area is less than half a mile, and nearly a quarter of this is taken up by the area itself. To the south the city is limited by the valley of Hinnom, to the east by that of the Kidron, and the only directions in which it could expand sufficiently were the west and north, and this would naturally carry it far beyond this assumed site. To speak of crowding such an immense body of people within the space indicated by this site of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher carries absurdity on its face. 3. Jesus was not only crucified without the walls, but in a garden. Josephus informs us, as I mentioned in my last discourse, that the wealthier inhabitants had their gardens and orchards covering all the suburbs. That at this period of the history of the city the spot occupied by this church could have been a garden or orchard is very improbable. 4. If we are right in the significance of the name—an elevation in the form of a human skull—then there is everything against the supposition that Calvary was what is now called the Holy Sepulcher. The present sepulcher is some eighteen feet below the street near the church. There are no indications that this street has been filled up largely. Calvary, according to this, would be in a hollow. The sepulcher itself is very cramped and small, dug out of the rock from the surface downward, and not as the Jews generally made their tombs, from the side face, working in laterally. These considerations are all against the truthfulness of this site as that of Calvary. Dr. Robinson and others, after canvassing the whole subject, come to this conclusion. Others, however, are just as strenuous the other way. Mr. Barclay, a missionary resident at Jerusalem,

thinks the crucifixion took place east or northeast of the city over the Kidron. Doubt and darkness rest upon the actual site of this awful tragedy. Jerusalem is there still; but the glorious city of the past is no more. Its great natural features can not be obliterated. The site of their temple, Mount Zion, the dwelling-place of kings, Hinnom and Kidron and Olivet, are all there; we know that on this soil our Savior preached and prayed, and suffered and ascended; we know that here the most amazing events in the history of our race transpired. But we can not say that here, just here, he stood and taught; just here he was in an agony; just here he was tried; just here he hung upon the cross; just here he was entombed; just here he ascended. Eighteen centuries have gone since Titus planted his engines against the walls of Jerusalem; compassed her round with his flaming legions; burned her temple; slaughtered her people; leveled her walls, her palaces, and her humbler dwellings, and sowed the very ground with salt in the execution of his terrible purpose. Individual sites, save those of nature, were overwhelmed or obscured. War is fearfully destructive, not only of life, but of all else, however dear. He did his work. A wretched village grew up on the conquered city. It grew into size and strength. It was conquered by the Arab, by the Turk, by the Crusader, by the Arab again. What wonder that after these centuries of desolation we can not mark the site of Calvary, and tell just where the Son of God died and was buried. It is not on the earthly position of the cross, nor on the cross itself, it is on the Son of God who hung there,

we fix our faith ; we suffer no material associations to come between our hearts and him who bore our sins and became a curse for us.

Before he is fastened to the cross Jesus is offered wine mingled with vinegar and gall ; a potion often given to criminals to stupefy their sensibilities and enable them better to endure the approaching suffering. He rejects it ; for the work of salvation is to be wrought out with an unclouded mind and a body sensitive to the extreme of human suffering. Disrobed of his clothes, he is then nailed to the cross. It has been questioned whether his hands and his feet, or his hands only, were nailed. Both methods were practiced at times. So men were sometimes crucified with the head downward. But two things seem to settle this question for us. Jesus, after his resurrection, appealed to the personal appearance of his hands and feet as pierced, to indicate that he was really the crucified one. Then all the early writers, who knew well the usual form of crucifixion, speak of the nailing of both hands and feet. With this we rest in the conviction that both were nailed to the tree. His dress was divided among the soldiers immediately charged with his execution, to whom it of right and by custom belonged.

Crucifixion itself was a Roman, and not a Jewish mode of execution. But it was so ordered of God that in this, and in the scourging, the very method of his death should more fully correspond with the terms in which it had been foretold. He bare our griefs and carried our sorrows ; in his stripes we are healed. The 22d Psalm, the 53d of Isaiah, open to us the very transactions of this and its antecedent scenes.

In respect to the time of the crucifixion, there is a seeming discrepancy. Matthew, Mark, and Luke speak of the sixth hour from which the darkness continued until the ninth hour, that is from our twelve to three. But Mark, in respect to the condemnation and the opening scenes of the crucifixion, says it was the third hour, or our nine o'clock. John, however, alluding to the condemnation and the events following, says it was about the sixth hour. The best explanation which harmonizes these two is this: It was customary, not only to mark the day by twelve hours, beginning and ending with six o'clock, but it was usual also, practically, to divide the day into four parts, still retaining the subdivisions. Thus it was the first hour, or division, from six to nine; the third hour, from nine to twelve; the sixth extended from twelve to three. The amount of Mark's statement would be that the condemnation and the crucifixion occupied the time within the division extending from nine to twelve; while John asserts that this whole scene culminated towards, or about the sixth hour, that is, towards twelve o'clock. Thus, in effect, without resorting to any minute description, their words amount to the same thing.

It is also said in Matthew, that the *thieves* crucified with him upbraided him; while Luke, in that most touching paragraph, gives us the repentance of one of these, and his pardon by the suffering Savior. The explanation is easy to him who seeks it. When first they were brought to crucifixion, these men railed alike on Jesus. But the spirit which he manifested affected them differently. And in this the various success of the gospel in this world is manifested. To one it

proves a savor of life, to another of death ; one heart is touched and repents, the other rails on and curses to the end. They knew of Jesus before ; but now they are brought into a position of deeper hostility or sincere repentance. One heart, in spite of his crimes and his foul upbraiding a little before, is touched, is melted, is persuaded this is the Son of God, and, believing, prays to be remembered when Jesus shall come in his kingdom. Dying repentances are not usually to be relied on as real and true. But here is a case of sincerity ; and he must be a bold man who dare assert that it is the only one that ever occurred. Deeply as I feel the hazard of trusting the redemption of the soul to a dying hour ; certain as I am that the multitude are then in no state to repent, and that many who seem to evince penitence then are often deceived, yet it is not for me to limit the grace or the mercy of Christ. I know not what God may do or accept at that hour ; but I do know it is a fearful and hazardous thing to hang the hope of immortality on such a slender thread, and trust to a possible may be, the immortal interests of the soul. I cry to you, therefore, now is the accepted time ; now is the day of mercy. Believe and avow your faith in Christ now, in the hour of health, and you will be prepared alike to live or die.

Into the lingering agonies of death by crucifixion, the most accursed form of execution ever invented, I can not enter. Nor is this the time to enter fully into that spiritual anguish, which far outweighs that of physical suffering, which was concentrated in him as the sufferer for the sins of the race. No one can read the descriptions of these last hours without being

deeply affected. But one thing is most manifest through it all: the spirit, the bearing, the words of the sufferer, so sublime, so god-like, so wonderful. Think of these for a moment, and see how they harmonize with his character as the Son of God suffering for our sins. Hear his words to the wailing women; how sad, not for him, but for them! How prophetic of what soon fell upon them! Hear his prayer for his murderers: Father, forgive them! Hear his answer to the penitent thief; to-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise! See him refusing the stupefying potion, that with a sensitive body and an unclouded mind he may bear all the agony! Hear those words, the saddest, most expressive ever uttered: *My God, My God*, why hast thou forsaken me? when the power of death culminated over his soul. Then listen to his dying and triumphant word: *It is finished!* and tell me who is this? who can this be? and wonder not that this death touches the hearts of millions and on this Redeemer they rest their hopes of heaven. Here is sympathy with humanity; here is the prophetic insight; here is the spirit of personal forgiveness; here is the declaration and the assertion of his power to save the penitent; here are the sorrows of hell as he bears sin; here is filial love caring for his mother; here is the triumphant affirmation that his work is done; here is holy confidence in God: Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit! Such a death-scene, the most extraordinary in the world's history, belongs only to the most extraordinary being in all history. But this is not all. Nature itself, as if in deepest sympathy with his sufferings, is as if troubled and distressed. It is the time of the full moon, when the passover was kept, and

when there could be no natural eclipse. All that morning the sun had shone with April serenity. But when he had reached his meridian, a change begins. At the mid-day hour Jesus is hanging between heaven and earth. Without any apparent cause, a sudden obscuration darkens the sun; it deepens and spreads over the whole land; it becomes darkness; the fowls retire to their nightly repose; there is terror on the minds of men; it deepens, it continues for three hours, when the death-wail rises, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me!" Then the earth moves, the veil in the temple is rent, Jesus cries, "It is finished!" "Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit." The work of atonement is over; the light returns, and nature resumes her wonted courses, as the sun breaks forth upon the world. The dispensation of Moses is at an end; that of Christ is commenced, and henceforth Christianity is to run its course and bear its tidings of salvation round the earth. Then first the voice of the Gentile world is heard in solemn confession of its faith in Jesus. The world outside the Jew sat there in the person of the centurion and his fellow-soldiers, watching for the end. He hears the words, he sees the demeanor of Jesus, he is awed by the darkness, he feels the earth move and rock, and with deep emotion he cries, "Truly, this is a righteous man; this is the Son of God." Soon that cry is to be taken up and re-echoed from lip to lip, till it reaches the bounds of the empire, "This is the Son of God." From that hour a fearful darkness began to settle on the Jewish state; but out of it the light of a crucified and a risen Savior broke forth to illuminate the Gentile world. To-day we sit in this Christian temple in the calm

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hope of mercy through the crucified. The forgiven malefactor has been multiplied into a company no man can number. Who now shall begin to describe the results that have flown from that love, to bless the world? or who hereafter shall enumerate the benedictions of that fearful suffering in opening the gates of a better life upon our ruined humanity? The redeemed in heaven cry, Worthy is the Lamb, for he was slain for us: the redeemed on earth here in anticipation join in that triumphant song. Who is there here to-night that can not say, Glory, honor, power, and might be unto the Lamb forever and ever!

## XXIV.

AFTER DEATH AND BEFORE THE RESURRECTION.

*“ There laid they Jesus, therefore, because of the Jews’ preparation day; for the sepulcher was nigh at hand.”—*John xix : 42.

*“ To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise.”—*Luke xxiii : 43.

WE have followed Christ from the hall of Pilate to Calvary. We have seen him nailed upon the cross, and lifted up between heaven and earth. We have heard those wonderful words which he there uttered. We have witnessed the fearful agony when he was made a curse for us. We saw him when he committed himself to his Father, and all was over. We wish now to notice a few things that occurred after his death and before his resurrection, and then follow, as far as it is permitted us, his departing spirit to the other world. It was usual to let the bodies of the crucified hang until some time after it was made certain that death had done its work. The time varied during which death ensued, from a few hours to a day or more. But we are here on Jewish soil; we are near Jerusalem. The Sabbath was approaching; the Sabbath of the Pascal week; the great Sabbath of the year. Tens of thousands were gathered there to celebrate that highest solemnity of their religion. It was not fit, nor in accordance with their rules, that the

bodies of malefactors should remain exposed on this day. The event of death must be hastened, if necessary, that they might be buried out of sight. The chief Jews, who did not hesitate to murder the innocent on the day of preparation for the Sabbath, are too conscientiously obedient to their law to suffer the wounded one to remain for that day on the cross. They hasten to Pilate, and obtain a public order to have the legs of the crucified broken, and thus crush out the decaying embers of life. A party of soldiers immediately hasten to perform this work. The malefactors on either side of Jesus are still alive; their legs are broken. They come to Jesus; the heart has ceased to beat; the coldness of death has begun; he is dead. But, to make assurance doubly sure, instead of breaking his legs, one of them plunges his spear into his side. This stroke, had he been alive and vigorous, would have killed him. Now it serves another purpose. A remarkable result followed. Instantly, there followed the spear a stream of blood and water. John is near enough; sees it; marks it; and gives his solemn attestation to it. Hear his words: "And he that saw it bare record, and his record is true, and he knoweth that he saith is true, that ye might believe." Why, then, does he insist on this statement as of special importance—something they might believe? Two answers are given: The first, that, by this testimony, John meant to give assurance to some minds that Christ was really dead; such a spear-stroke, attended by such a remarkable effusion of blood and water, made assurance of death doubly sure. The second answer is based upon the fact that such an effusion of blood and water from a dead body is unnatural. It is certain

that the physiological grounds for such a fact are not satisfactory. I need not occupy your time now in stating them. But if this fact can not be accounted for on natural grounds, then it was supernatural, and in harmony with all the other supernatural events that attended his death. For this reason, that it was out of the ordinary course of nature, John insisted on it as a testimony to the divine power which signalized this great fact. Either of these answers is sufficient, according as the facts are understood. The event itself is specially stated by the apostle as real and important. If it can not be accounted for on any natural grounds, as some assert, then it is allowable and necessary for us to regard it as miraculous. But we are to remember that the supernatural in the Bible generally asserts itself so clearly that man can not deny it without denying the truth and the inspiration of the sacred writers. In this case, John records the event as important, without obliging us, from anything he says, to regard it as miraculous.

But now the object of the Jews was accomplished; Jesus was dead. He was crucified; he was slain. Among those who had witnessed this scene was Joseph of Arimathea, an honorable counsellor, who had not given his voice to crucify the Savior; who, indeed, waited for the kingdom of God. Shortly after the close of these proceedings, he repaired, without the knowledge of the Jews, to the house of Pilate, and, alone, boldly entered in and asked for the body of Jesus. Of this the Jews knew nothing at the time. They supposed that, as in other cases, his legs would be broken, and after a time he would be thrust into a pit with the two malefactors, on the

grounds appropriated to those who had died thus ignominiously. But it was not so to be; as they had fulfilled prophecy in killing him, Joseph was to fulfill prophecy in burying him. Pilate is amazed at the report of his sudden death. He calls a centurion, who testifies to the fact. His wonder was natural enough. The crucified lingered for twelve hours, and sometimes for two days. The breaking of the legs only accelerated death, but did not immediately produce it. Jesus had hung on the cross only between three and four hours before his death, and shortly after he had received the wound in his side. But when assured of the fact officially, he gave liberty to Joseph to receive the body. This was sometimes done as a special favor to the friends of malefactors. Pilate, in this case, would naturally accord with such a request. It is now even; the Sabbath was nigh, which with the Jews began at sunset. Joseph, therefore, hurries his preparations for the burial, in which he is aided by Nicodemus, another of the secret friends of Jesus. In the place where he was crucified there was a garden. Whether the crucifixion actually took place in the garden itself, or near to it, is of no consequence here. In this garden Joseph had hewn a new tomb out of the solid rock; it was tenantless. Taking down the body from the cross, they wrapped it reverently in linen with the spices usually employed by the Jews in the preparation of the dead for burial. Gently they deposit the body in the tomb; they roll the large stone door, which ran often in a groove, against the opening, and Jesus was entombed. There were here no funeral rites; no wailing lamentations. It was done in silence—in the deep hush of silent thought and sad disappointment. A

few only are present. Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joses, and the mother of Zebedee's children are among them, and, sitting opposite the tomb, watch with tearful interest the closing scene. But now the entrance is closed ; Joseph and Nicodemus retire ; the faithful, loving disciples, lingering in sadness, slowly leave the tomb. Oh, how the heart clings to the forms of those we love ! How we watch their sepulchers ! But here was the body of one, more than a friend, the friend of friends ; the friend of sinners ; the mighty Savior who had brought peace to their hearts—the peace of pardon, the grace of God. They tear themselves away ; the sun has set, the Sabbath begun ; one by one the stars come out and shine down upon that tomb where lies the earthly body of him who made them. Darkness and solitude are there. The mangled body of the Lord sleeps, rests there. The thorn crown, the scourge, the heavy cross, the nails, the spear trouble it not. The consecrated flesh in which the Redeemer lived and suffered, sleeps now ; it only sleeps in preparation for another scene, a bright, august, and blissful awakening. His enemies have wreaked their vengeance upon him ; his friends have laid his body away in the sepulcher, where no eye sees him, no rude hand shall sacrilegiously invade its rest. But, no ! his enemies are not done yet ; they at least are not at rest. What can they fear, now that the body of the murdered one is safe in the tomb ? Ah ! the wicked are never at rest. The deeds of sin are fire of hell in their souls. Their restless thoughts allow them no peace. Peace, peace, there is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked ! Conscience is a terrible inmate of the sinner's bosom, and the thought of Christ is a

terror to them still. He who could raise the dead may rise himself. Then come home to them the words they had heard he spake. After three days he will rise again. Agitated, alarmed, they inquire where he is buried; they find he is laid in Joseph's tomb. Oh! they will watch him; they will prevent the fulfillment of his words. It is the Sabbath, the holiest Sabbath of the year, devoted only to high and sacred employments. No matter; a troubled conscience with a foul heart knows no law. Trembling, they force their way to the presence of a heathen judge; they tell him of the prophecy; they beg of him the appointment of sentinels to watch the tomb, ostensibly to guard the body from theft, lest his disciples should come and steal away this mangled corpse, and then the last error would be worse than the first. These men, professing to be most conscientious in the observance of the Sabbath, are not afraid to murder the innocent and then to violate the Sabbath in providing means to guard the murdered form. But why would the last error be worse than the first? Would the mere assertion by a few weak men, unsupported by facts, of the resurrection avail to disturb the public mind? Oh! there is a fear that Christ may rise! Pilate grants their requests, and then on that Sabbath morning, amidst the crowds hastening to their paschal solemnities, under the light of the blessed sun, a company of Roman soldiers are marched forth to watch Joseph's sepulcher. But even this is not enough; although it was death for a Roman soldier to sleep at his post or neglect his watch, conscience still fears. So they not only set a watch, but they actually seal the stone door, so that it can not be moved without breaking it. Now

all is secure as far as man can make it ; now they can return to the temple and worship God. They have killed Christ ; they have imprisoned his corpse in the sepulcher ; they have guarded against the possibility of imposture ; and now they may rest. We shall see.

Here, however, the body of Jesus rests through the Sabbath undisturbed by the mad rush of the multitudes, by the pains of crucifixion, by the watchful sentinels who guard it from without. But where is Jesus with his human soul ? Where does he spend this first Sabbath of his rest from all the bloody toils and anguish of his life on earth ? We must go back a little and hear his words spoken to the penitent malefactor, while they hung upon the cross. To-day shalt thou be with me in *Paradise*. First of all you will notice that this word not only speaks his pardon and his salvation, but it is prophetic of the time of his death. *To-day*—a few hours would elapse before to-day would be past. The crucified naturally would linger for many hours, far into the next day, and often into that succeeding it. Who knew, at that hour, that before the sun set and darkness covered the earth, his legs should be broken and his body, alive or dead, should be thrust away into the grave and put out of sight forever. Only Jesus knew it, and, in the very terms of pardon and promised salvation, declared that to-day his soul should be released from the body and ascend to the blessedness of the redeemed. "*To-day shalt thou be with me in PARADISE.*" Here, then, let us dwell a few moments on this word *Paradise*. Jesus, in all his instruction to his disciples and his popular discourses, never uses it. Paul once employs it, when he speaks of himself or some other person as having been caught

up into Paradise and hearing unutterable things; and John, in the Revelation, uses it symbolically: "To him that overcometh, will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God." The word itself is of Persian order. It denoted those beautiful and fruitful gardens which they were so fond of creating, and which to them involved the highest human delights, just as Eden represents to us the scene into which Adam was first introduced. Thence it passed into Palestine, and here attained a higher meaning. Not to speak now of the speculations of the rabbinical schools, it gradually came to stand in the popular mind for a far-off land after death, where no sun should smite nor cold chill, where soft breezes ever blew, fruits grew spontaneously, and flowers adorned the hills and valleys—a region of blessedness and rest. Now, Jesus, in addressing the dying thief, his mind already penitent, spake in language which was familiar to him. Paradise to him was a familiar word, representing to him, in contrast with his present agonies and sorrows, a place of rest, of peace, of purity, of blessedness. His mind, exalted by his sorrowful experience and spiritual exercises, would grasp at once the higher idea of holiness and pardon in the presence of the Good. Nothing more than this word uttered by Jesus was needed to excite hope, and be assured of pardon and a better life beyond the grave. But this is not all. It is not said, "To-day shalt *thou* be in Paradise;" but, "To-day shalt thou be *with me* in Paradise. I, too, shall lead the way; both of us shall enter that place of joy,"—where Jesus went immediately when he committed his soul into the hands of his heavenly

Father ; thither went the penitent malefactor. No place of discipline, of expiation for his sins, of purgatorial fires (of which some foolishly dream), intervened between the agony of the cross and the bliss of Paradise. "To-day thou shalt be with me in Paradise." As the lightning flashes from the far distant cloud to the earth, as the light passes from orb to orb, so upward passed this penitent soul and this all-perfect soul into the joys of Paradise. But what is this Christian Paradise? It is a purely spiritual state. Souls enter there. The sensuous and the sensual are not there. Men turn symbols into facts. They are ever likening the future to the present ; the Roman, the Greek, the Mohanmedan, the wild Indian, differing so widely in their culture and civilization, are ever anxious to assimilate the future to the present. But Christianity spiritualizes this place, the place of souls. Then it is a holy place. Nothing that defiles the heart, nothing that is not in full sympathy with a pure, a loving, a believing heart, enters there. It is put in contrast with the future state of the wicked. Abraham is there ; but Dives is not there. The unbelieving, the impure, are not there. It is a state of blessedness. "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord, *from henceforth* ; yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors, and their works do follow them." There is knowledge, there is life there, which are unutterable to human ears. It is an *intermediate state*. It is not the state in which the naked soul without its resurrected body is forever to abide. The wicked, with the devil and his angels, have their state by themselves, waiting the resurrection and the final judgment. The saints have their blessed state near to the

throne, where they abide, waiting the final manifestation of Jesus in *that day* and the putting on of the spiritualized forms which they enter at the resurrection. Such is the state of Paradise.

But where, oh! where is this Paradise? Men, in their pride of intellect or the presumptions of their knowledge of the other world, are ever eager to localize and materialize the dwelling-place of Gods and men. The ancients seated Jehovah and many of his associates on mountain-tops; some they placed in the ocean, the lakes, the rivers, the stormy north. Man they placed after death in Tartarus, deep down in the bowels of the earth, with its compartments for different classes of sinners, and its Acheron river, across which only the buried dead could pass. And so one of the grandest of our poets, following their lead, visits, like Virgil, these seats of hell, and then passes on to the seats of bliss. And we, too, so accustomed to see, to hear, to embrace the departed, cry out, as they vanish from us: Oh! whither have they gone? Where is their dwelling-place? Are they in the air around us? We long again to hear the voice, to see the shadowy form, or know just where they dwell. But Christianity answers nothing to gratify these earthly cravings. It brings before us a spiritual world. Its voice is solely a word of faith. Believe the promise. All is well. They are blessed, though you see, though you hear them not. It gives us sometimes symbols, but never localizes. It gives us assurances, never the things which here are unutterable. We walk by faith, not by sight. It is enough for us that God, the unseen, holds all space, all time, all eternity, in the hollow of His hand. It is disputed among men

whether the stars are inhabited. God holds the universe in all its parts in His control. The house into which these souls are to be ushered is not made with hands; it is a habitation of God, undefiled, incorruptible, and that fadeth not away, as shall this earth and these heavens over us, when His time comes—the one melt with fervent heat, the other be rolled together as a scroll.

“In vain my fancy strives to paint  
The moment after death,  
The glories that surround the saint  
When yielding up his breath.

“One gentle sigh his fetters breaks:  
We scarce can say, ‘He’s gone,’  
Before the willing spirit takes  
Its mansion near the throne.

“This much, and this is all we know,  
Saints are completely blest,  
Have done with sin and care and love,  
And with their Savior rest.”

Yes! this is all we know, and all we need to know. Faith answers for all the rest, and in faith we die, and then our faith shall vanish in the full sight and knowledge of the paradise of God.

Into this paradise Jesus now enters, and shortly after the forgiven penitent, received and saved in the very hour of his agony. But he is not alone. Singular he is in the imperial grandeur of his nature; singular in the godlike work he has accomplished. But he is not *alone* there. Myriads are there; Adam and Abel, and Enoch and Seth, the patriarchs, the martyr-prophets, the saints of all ages, meet and greet him in his royal entrance. These are the fruits of his

travail; for these he entered humanity and became obedient unto death. His very presence is the proclamation of the finished gospel, the triumph over sin and death, to that vast congregation. What joy, what love enraptures the heart, kindles in the eye, breaks forth in praise! We seek not to penetrate the veil that hides this scene from our eyes. The Redeemer spends his first Sabbath in paradise, amidst the redeemed. Let us leave him there for the present. The time will come when we shall know their rapture, and bow with them before his throne, and feel, in all its fullness, his living presence, thrilling the joy of heaven through the redeemed soul.

Let us turn to another point of deepest interest to every thoughtful mind. The trial, the death, and burial of Christ constitute the most remarkable event in history. This event does not stand alone as an isolated fact unannounced and unconnected in the past. The Scriptures declare it to be the consummation and gathering together of long trains of influences and providences working to this end. It is not such that you can say of it, it has no past, there is to be no future. It is not like the death of others, a sudden and transient scene. From this point the history of the world dates back to Eden; it dates forward to the conflagration. All along the line of Scripture history the evidences of his coming crop out and thrust themselves into view. But not to speak of these in general now, the scene just before us was singularly detailed hundreds of years before it occurred. His sinlessness is stated with great explicitness—He is my righteous servant, the holy one. His conduct under arrest, and before it, is declared—He is led as a lamb to the slaugh-

ter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth. With the same unresisting spirit he followed the band sent to arrest, and was silent save when judicially called to testify of himself. He is slain, not in a tumult, not in a forcible attempt to assail his rights, but after trial and judgment. He is taken from prison and judgment, and who shall declare his generation? He was accursed, reviled, crucified as an impostor and a malefactor, cursed of God; so it was foretold—we did esteem him stricken of God and afflicted. But he was innocent, and died for the sins of others; so, Pilate declares, I find no guilt in him; and the high priest, unconsciously fulfilling prophecy, says, It is expedient that he should die for the sins of the people. He was scourged and thorn crowned; prophecy foretells that—By his *stripes* we are healed. He is wounded to death on the cross, and his side is pierced with the spear—he was pierced for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities, says the prophet. To add ignominy to suffering, he was not only crucified, but with malefactors, and it was designed he should be buried with them; instead of this, the rich Joseph placed him in his own new tomb, and so prophecy had said as one of our best commentators has it, “his grave was appointed with the wicked, but he was with a rich man at his death.” (Barnes.) It is said, “not a bone of him shall be broken;” instead of breaking his legs, the spear is thrust into his side. Even the incidental act of casting lots on his vesture found its fulfillment in the actions of the soldiers.

Now, without going into this subject more at length, is it possible for any man to mark this trial, crucifixion, and burial, and suppose that these correspondencies

with truths uttered hundreds of years before, are all accidental? Does a house build itself and arrange its apartments in fit order, and roof itself against sun and storm? Incredible, you say, without a designing mind. Well, what is the designing mind that arranged these correspondencies? Did Caiaphas mean to fulfill a prophecy, when he declared it expedient that Christ should die for the sins of the people? Did Pilate declare him innocent, and yet condemn him to be crucified, to meet a prediction in the Jewish Scriptures? Did the Jews mean to fulfill a prophecy, when, as far as their purposes went, they appointed him to die and be buried with criminals? Did the soldiers mean to fulfill the Scriptures, of which they knew nothing, when, instead of breaking his legs, they pierced his side? Did Joseph and Nicodemus mean to fulfill prophecy when they buried him in the tomb of the rich? Did the house build itself? Did these correspondencies arise of themselves? Why did a prophet, seven hundred years before, describe the life and death of this man with such singular minuteness? Did any other being ever live of whom all this was true? Yes! there was a design in it all; the mind of God, and the purpose of God, and the almighty power of God, flashes down through these centuries, and concentrates around the cross. But the disciples found out these things after his death, and then applied them as predictions! Of course they did. The prophecies existed long before, but the events did not exist. Jesus dies, and the events appear, just as the prophet declared they would, and then they recognized the prophecy and its fulfillment. We, to-day, read the prophecies, and follow out these scenes and recognize

the one in the other, and would recognize them if not a single one of the apostles had written of it. It would be just as unreasonable to deny the fulfillment of prophecy, in this case, as it would be to deny that the sun was created to shine and therefore it does shine; to deny that when Roebler wrote out his plan, and afterward executed it, in building the enormous suspension bridge at Cincinnati, he never meant to do it. Here is the plan, all written out centuries before, and here is the consummation of it in the cross of Jesus. And so Peter, just after the event occurred, could say with a divine assurance, "Him being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain." So Paul shortly after could say of the Jews, "and when they had *fulfilled all* that was written of him, they took him down from the tree and laid him in a sepulcher." Answer this, then; here is the trial and death of Jesus; and here the whole scene is described in the sacred Scriptures centuries before. If you admit that the prophet foresaw or by a divine inspiration wrote of this, then the Scriptures are inspired, then the death of Jesus is a sacrifice for sin, even for yours. Deny this, and consent to be counted a fool, both unreasonable and wicked. Oh! why will men twist and turn and refine on words and marshal their hypercriticism to put God in Christ out of the world; to shutter their houses against the blessed sun; to fling away anchor and needle and compass and leave their souls to drift on the stormy sea of life? Why take they so much pains to make their damnation sure? What has unaided reason or the force of will

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done in this world to lift the heart out of the mire of sin, to give peace to the conscience, to fortify the heart against the incursions of evil and fear, and cast a single ray on the unknown hereafter, to save men from themselves and their deserved punishment and secure an entrance into the everlasting kingdom of God? Here by the cross is light, strength, forgiveness, eternal life. There is a Paradise of God. Jesus entered it in triumph, that you might enter it. To you he brings to-day the word of promise, the word of hope. *Believe*, and thou shalt be saved.

## XXV.

## THE RESURRECTION.

*“He is not here; He is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay.”*—Matthew xxviii : 6.

WE enter now upon a scene of gladness. A holy joy pervades the believing heart as it views this wonderful event. We pass at once from the most awful to the most sublime and exhilarating scene recorded in the life of Jesus. Out of darkness the most intense, we emerge into the brightness of an accomplished salvation. From the cross, the agony, the blood, the death, the darkness of the crucifixion, the grave, we are transported into the new life of the resurrection. In every instance but one, where the word *Pascha* occurs in the Scriptures, our translators have fitly rendered it *Passover*. But in one instance, Acts xii : 4, they have put for it the word “*Easter*.” Now *Easter*, or *Eostre*, was said to be the name of one of our old Anglo-Saxon heathen deities, whose festival was celebrated in April. The resurrection occurred on the first Sabbath after the full moon in April, as the paschal Sabbath among the Jews occurred the day before. And thus this Christian Sabbath was baptized with a heathen name, after it became a festival among the Christians. But for us every Christian Sabbath, through the year, commemorates the Resurrection. This day Jesus rose, while on the old Sabbath his body

lay at rest in the tomb. From this day the weekly Sabbath passed from the seventh to the first day of the week; and this change originating at that time and perpetuated ever since, is the abiding memorial and commemoration of his resurrection.

We dwelt last upon the burial of the body of Jesus, and we saw his soul enter Paradise, leading in triumph the penitent malefactor. His entrance there must have stirred the heart of every redeemed one with unutterable wonder and delight. He mingles with the patriarchs and prophets and believers of every age, and proclaimed to them the full accomplishment of his glorious work. In him they see their mighty Redeemer. In him they see the brightness of the Father's glory. In him they welcome the incarnate Son of God. What words he then uttered, what high mysteries of his kingdom he then unfolded, to these redeemed ones, the mind of mortals conceives not. But it must have been a scene most sublime, when from the cross of his accomplished agony he moved amid those armies of the faithful, and saw there, in part, the fruit of the travail of his soul and was satisfied. For the first time they serve him after his work is done; for the first time they see him as the incarnate Son, not indeed as clothed with his resurrection body, but with his human soul, like them a brother, unlike them the Son of God. And as from far and near men gather joyously to witness the advent of an earthly chieftan, or a great ruler, who has led their cause, and, through obstacles vast and manifold, has guided that cause to victory. As they hail his coming with shouts of joy, and, wild with excitement, they press

to see his face and hear his voice and may be to touch even the hem of his garment, so these spirits of the just made perfect, still human in their nature, meet with unutterable joy the Captain of their salvation, look upon the infinite Son who in their nature has fought the great fight for humanity, and now presents himself exalted above all principalities and powers, their everliving Redeemer.

And now the third night is past and the third day is blushing in its dawn, since the march of his death-agony began. His mighty victory over sin he has manifested first to these redeemed spirits, and held his jubilee of praise amidst the unnumbered throng who shout, Worthy is the Lamb, for he was slain for us! Now, then, he must manifest to his church on earth that his body can be no longer holden by death; that the malice and power of men and Satan have reached their limit; that though, to consummate the sacrifice for sin, they were permitted to hang him upon the cross, yet, that finished, their work was done. Death, which was for a little time a mighty agent, must now be despoiled of his power, and the victor over sin must now show himself the victor over death; nature itself must now sit powerless, while a greater than nature, even its Lord, comes down into it and snatches from its grasp the pierced and precious body it seemed to hold with an eternal force. Men must see, and know, and feel, that a new, a vast, a wonderful event in human history has occurred; that henceforth sin has lost its power of destroying in hell the souls of his people, and death has been stripped of its power to hold their bodies in the grave. The two grand terrors of the human soul; the two

forces most inimical to our peace and joy—sin and death—must both be stripped forever of their prestige of victory, and slink away, baffled and discrowned, to Satan and those who prefer his reign to that of our immortal Redeemer. When he cried, “It is finished,” on the cross, he had conquered *sin*; but men thought *sin* had conquered him; when they laid his body in the tomb, even his disciples thought *death* had conquered. But now this judgment is to be forever reversed; now it shall be manifest to all the world, the powers of darkness shall be openly despoiled; captivity shall be led captive, when, a conqueror, he puts death forever under his feet, and shows himself victorious as the Savior of sinners. They had mockingly said, “He saveth others, himself he can not save.” Damnable accusation; hell-born thought; blasphemous assumption. They have done their will; they have had their hour of triumph; they have shouted their aha, aha! they have poured the full cauldron of burning wrath and ignominy upon him; they have had their jubilee in the Sanhedrim; “the King of the Jews” is dead. Where is your Son of God now? Where is your Messiah now? Where is the Nazarene now? Oh! thus the wicked often dream—that God is dead; that his wrath is played out; that hell is a myth; that Satan is a chimera. But God is not dead; hell is not a myth; the plans of the infinite move slowly but surely, till the time comes for action. Then, in an instant, out flashes the divine arm, and the bolt falls. Jesus dies; Jesus is buried; his own voice has foretold it all; now the time has come; the third day is here. From that Paradise of the departed saints, he passes to the tomb; he enters the dead, but

uncorrupt, body; vital heat flashes through it; its transformation into a spiritual body has begun; he rises, the napkin is taken off, folded, and laid aside, the linen shroud is put off and laid in another place. There is no haste, no confusion, no disorder, as if human hands, in their tremor and haste, had visited the house of death. And Jesus has risen! Death is dis-crowned; sin atoned.

But he is not alone. Around the throne of God ever stand and worship millions of bright, unfallen angels, ministers of his high purposes to men. They, too, have their interest, and shall have their part, in this great redemption; they, too, have watched the progress of this great design, from the hour when Adam fell. And now, as the sublime plan hastens to its accomplishment, their interest deepens, and they come on ministries of love to our fallen world. Jesus is to them the grand event of eternity. They open to Mary her coming motherhood of his humanity. They sing his birth-day song, jubilant with praise and love to God and man, on the plains of Bethlehem. They witness his baptism, when, as Messiah, his mission is open to the world. They minister to him in great joy, when his temptation in the wilderness is accomplished. They comfort and support him in his fearful agony in the garden. And now, swift-winged, with unutterable delight, they attend him to the tomb. All is still, save as the hum of preparation for the day amidst the vast multitudes of the city sends its softened sounds into the garden. All is silent, save as the watchmen speak to each other of their speedy release. Suddenly, a tremor is felt in the solid earth, startling the anxious watchers; the form of an

angel outflashes before their eyes; he rolls back, as if it were a toy, the mighty stone from the door of the sepulcher, and sits upon it; the watchers, startled before, affrighted now, shrink in terror away, and Jesus comes forth; He has arisen!

“ Love’s redeeming work is done,  
Fought the fight, the battle won;  
So, our sun’s eclipse is o’er;  
So, he sets in blood no more.

Vain the stone, the watch, the seal;  
Christ hath burst the gates of hell;  
Death in vain forbids his rise;  
Christ hath opened Paradise.

Lives again our glorious king,  
‘ Where, O death, is now thy sting?’  
Once he died our souls to save,  
‘ Where’s thy victory, boasting grave?’ ”

But what become of the watch set to guard the tomb? Terrified, they dare not appear there. They scatter around, until the safe time to return to their barracks. Some of them steal into the city, and privately inform the chief priests of this great event. Then there is a mighty stir and commotion. The grand council is assembled; they debate and discuss what now shall be done to keep the knowledge of this event from the people? In some way, it must be denied; in some way the watch must be silenced. Their credit is at stake; if this is true, they are most willful murderers. They will not think of accepting the fact, and confessing Jesus to be the Messiah. Too long they have resisted and trampled upon the clearest testimony. The soul may so persistently harden itself as to be insensible to the most powerful light and

truth. Some means must be taken to circulate a counter-story. They resort to bribery. Money is an all-potent agent in influencing men of no deep religious principle. Men risk their lives and ruin their souls to obtain it. Mere politicians, statesmen, judges, men of all varieties and conditions of life, high and low, without the fear of God before their eyes, have their price. This has come to be the vice of our legislation, the vice of multitudes in our country. Rapacity and the lust of gold was the sordid vice of the mass of Roman procurators, generals, governors. The Roman soldier was no better than his master, when the price was large enough to pay for the risk. So the priests bid high; they gave *large* money to the watch. What for? To tell the world two falsehoods; one that they slept, a crime, in a Roman soldier on guard, worthy of death; the other, while they slept, the disciples of Jesus stole his body. If they slept how could they know that? A lie on its face. But suppose the governor hears that we slept on our post? We must die. No! We will attend to that matter. You are our guard, for the time doing our work, not the proper work of a Roman soldier. If we are satisfied with your conduct, he will be satisfied. Fear not. So, taking the money, they propagate the self-contrary falsehood, and the council, already steeped in innocent blood, maintain the conscious lie. To what ignominy, to what falsehood, will not men descend, when once they have thrown truth away and with it justice? Thus darkly ended in deliberate falsehood the crime of these false and cruel men; false to God and false to man, as they rejected for the nation her own Messiah and prepared the way for the hour of vengeance.

Henceforth, despite their lying artifice, above their malicious and impotent rage, the shout "He is risen!" "He is risen!" rises and swells louder and louder, until it echoes from every mountain-top and across every sea and through every valley of all the earth; henceforth, these mitred and vested murderers shall appear only for a moment as baffled persecutors and then vanish away amid the blood and smoke and crash of temple, palaces, walls, peoples mingled in one common ruin.

But now we turn to another scene. Where now, amid all these fearful events, are the chosen disciples? Scattered by the first assault of his enemies, they await in trembling anxiety the issue of his trial. But when he is crucified, and all is over, they hide themselves away from the now triumphant Sanhedrim. They fear lest that wild, excited nation, lifting its angry surges against the heavens, shall dash down on them. The darkness that settled down upon the tomb where Jesus lay was the symbol of a denser darkness around their souls. They could not forget; they could not hope. Bewildered, stunned by the terrible stroke, they cower in an agony of silence away from all the festivities of the paschal Sabbath. Again and again had Christ forewarned them that he must die. Still the vision of an earthly kingdom in all its triumphant splendor held possession of their souls. To them it seems impossible that such amazing supernatural power, such divine authority, such heavenly light and purity and love, in the person of their Lord, must hang upon the cross and meet a felon's doom. Again and again he had assured them he should rise from the grave. They comprehended not his words;

they believe not in, they hope not for his resurrection. They care not but to hide their dishonored selves, their crushed hopes, away from the eyes of men. From the heights of heaven they fall into the depths of despair. Love, faith, hope, are all, like some splendid jewel, dashed and broken into fragments by one cruel stroke. No man can estimate the feelings or imagine the horrible darkness of those hours.

And now the early dawn spreads its gray streaks on the still darkened sky. Plunged in their grief, they heed it not; they recall not his glorious promise of the resurrection. Then it is, when strong and stalwart manhood, the lofty spirit that had said, "I will never deny thee," sits nourishing its hopeless grief, that woman appears in all her characteristic loveliness and watchfulness as an angel minister. She forgets not the duty of the hour. She can not minister to her living Lord, but minister she will to the dead body of him she loved. Bearing her spicery, she moves on to her loving task. She knows not of, or comprehends not, the resurrection. But as she approaches the garden where last she watched when his body was laid in the tomb, she bethinks herself of that great stone which closed the entrance and of her feeble arms, and asks herself almost in despair, "Who shall roll it away?" Ah! Another power mightier than soldiers or priests has anticipated her wish. As Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, Joanna, Salome, and others, this precious company of Christ's most loving disciples, wind through the shrubbery, they suddenly stand before the sepulcher. It is open; the stone is rolled away; the guard is fled; it is silent. They enter the tomb; it is tenantless. Mary Magda-

lene, full of but one thought, the body of her Lord is gone, instantly turns, and with hurried steps runs to tell John and Peter. But no sooner is she gone than the angels appear to the amazed women and tell them Jesus is risen. I stay not now to follow out the order of these stupendous events; how Peter and John answer the summons of Mary, "They have taken away our Lord;" how they run to the sepulcher; how Mary returns sadly; how Jesus meets her and meets the other women, rewarding their fervent zeal and undying love by the first manifestations of himself. On these we will dwell when we come to the direct argument for the resurrection. But now the great fact is out. The air is full of rumors. There is a new light abroad. Slowly the sun ascends and fills the valleys with his celestial light. Hope, wonder, amazement, alternate with doubt and fear in many hearts. They begin to recall his words, "After three days I will rise." But the change, the miracle, is so stupendous, so grand! Then they think how mighty, how grand, how prophetic, how truthful, he is. Some, like John, ever open to his words, believe the women; and the darkness is all gone, the joy is unspeakable and full of glory. Some wait in hope and doubt, but in none of them is there the despairing sorrow of yesterday; there is a gradual awakening to the truth, a half-bewildering feeling that the daylight is abroad, and a half-consciousness that still they dream. And so the day wears on—a day of agitation, fear, and hope, hope predominating till the sun descends.

Where now is Jesus? Triumphant over death, the mortal has begun to put on the immortal. His preaching, his teaching, is now ended on earth. He is to

remain for the confirmation of the faith in him as risen, and then he will ascend. But there is one of his disciples, the once proud, the fallen, the sad Peter, whose case he compassionates, and to him, after the women, he appears with kindly assurances of forgiveness, lifting him up into the light and strengthening him for his work on earth. Next we find him outside of the city in conversation with two of his disciples. Luke, in beautiful episode, relates the fact. One of these men is Cleophas and the other may have been Luke himself. They are traveling slowly and sadly to Emmaus, a village some seven miles from Jerusalem. The theme which fills all minds fill theirs. The trial, the death, the burial, the reported resurrection of Christ are the subjects of their subdued conversation. Jesus joins them as a stranger, inquires the reason of their sadness. They express astonishment that he should be ignorant of the wonderful events that had transpired at Jerusalem, and, describing them, mention his reported resurrection. Then with loving condescension he opens to them the Scriptures respecting the Messiah. From point to point, from the writings of Moses down to those of Malachi, he brings out the character, the life, the death, the rising and ascension of the Messiah. They listen as to an angel prophet. Their hearts glow with holy rapture at his visions of the Messiah, and soon they reach the village. But they will not part from him. He must abide with them and share their meal. Then as they are prepared to eat, Jesus takes the bread and blesses it. Then their eyes, their ears are open. Who like him can thus bless? Who like him can thus speak? That voice, in its divine, loving, familiar tones, enters their

hearts. At once Jesus is before them, their risen Savior, their glorious Lord. Then he vanishes from sight. Amazed, overjoyed, they can eat no more; with rapid steps, rehearsing his wondrous words, they return to Jerusalem. They seek the disciples, and as they enter, the words, "He is risen, he has appeared to Simon," anticipate their own joyful story. Then as this little company praise God, Jesus enters and stands before them. Yes, he is risen. Death, the grave, the malice and power of men can not hold him. The final demonstration of his Messiahship is complete. Henceforth the Redemption of Jesus, his incarnation, his life, his redeeming death, his resurrection, enter as living truths, the most vital and grandest truths, into human history. Roman falsehood, Jewish malice, Grecian skepticism, can never crush them out of human thought, or palsy their ennobling power over human hearts. From soul to soul these eternal realities pass into possession; men feed upon them and grow pure and strong. The sphere of faith enlarges from generation to generation, and as it enlarges, new power, new joy, new hope exalts and strengthens man. To the poor the gospel of this resurrection is preached and they grow rich, and to the weak it is divine strength; yea, to all it is salvation.

Some facts there are in the past, that impress themselves either on history or the character of nations, so deeply that it never wears out. Such a fact is the deluge, such a fact is the dispersion, the exodus of Israel from Egypt, and the captivity. But here is a fact affecting at first but a single actor and a few friends, obscure and nameless; yet this fact is grander than the deluges, and dispersions, and captivities. It

lifts itself at once into the light ; it incorporates itself with the purest thought of the world ; it put the crown upon Christ as the Savior of men and the incarnate Son of God. Neither science and civilization, nor degeneracy and revolution ; neither war nor peace, nor change of government, nor seas nor continents, separate this wonderful event from the conscious thought and feelings of mankind. The Sabbath, in its change from the last to the first day of the week, the word of God in which it is embalmed, ever proclaim it. It is the finishing demonstration of the chief event of history, the incarnation and death of Jesus, as the Son of God, for our redemption. It is the brightest miracle of time, since it is Christ himself in his completed Messiahship. But while in connection with the other great events of Christ's life, it is confirmatory of faith in him as the Redeemer of souls from death. It has in itself a special and peculiar application to the hearts of men in their hours of deepest thoughtfulness and earthly sorrow. The event of death gathers about it the most intense interest. That fact we and our friends must meet. Men shrink back from it in terror. The grave is dark ; it leads the way to corruption and oblivion. No voice from nature speaks in answer to our agonized inquiry, Where are the dead ? They are gone, but where ? The soul, is that dead too ? If it lives, where is it ? What lies in the future ? These thoughts, these questions man has and always must have, and they ever will stir his soul to its depths. It is here the resurrection stands out invested with a world-wide, a perennial interest. The resurrection for a few months or years is an event of power supernatural, superhuman. But yet it would not solve the

mystery or shed light on the destiny of man, or cast a ray on the darkness of the tomb. But the resurrection, that contained in itself a pledge of the final resurrection of all men who believed; a resurrection that is to be followed by no death, that opens to us the union of the soul and body and the change of the body to fit it for a new state of being; a resurrection that carries with it the knowledge of immortality and divine forgiveness to believing man. Oh, this is infinitely wonderful, rich and glorious beyond expression. This resurrection is light; is life. This great fact, once presented to the minds of men, grows stronger forever. The words of Jesus, "I am the resurrection and the life, whosoever believeth on me shall never die," can never grow obsolete or lose that almost tearful interest for dying men. For they not merely express a fact in history, they express a fact of living interest to men in all time. As the martyrs went to bloody or fiery deaths, confident that Jesus watched their dust and in his resurrection gave the pledge of their immortality, so, even now, we commit dust to dust, ashes to ashes, in the same hope of a glorious future. To-day, in spite of all the efforts the unbelievers have made to discredit this crown of the Savior's history, the Resurrection holds the souls of millions in quiet; to-day the words of Jesus, I am the resurrection and the life, are as sweet, as comforting, as full of hope, as when first he uttered them to the sorrowing. And, O, methinks there dwells not on the earth a thoughtful, a serious mind who would not love to have them uttered over his dust when his friends shall commit this mortal body to the dark grave.

Yes! he is risen; the mortal put on immortality,

the corruptible put on incorruption; and, as he ascended, he opened the gates of glory, the treasures of eternal life for his humble followers. His resurrection completes the character of a perfect Redeemer, and makes him the all-finished Captain of our salvation, and the living pledge of God himself, that, no matter where our dust shall lie, in what ocean-caverns it shall be hidden, however scattered as the dust of earth, into whatever other organisms it shall have passed, the soul shall one day seek out its kindred particles, and, changed and spiritualized, the identical man, in the freshness of immortal life, shall rise to be forever with the Lord. Wherefore, dearly beloved, hope on, pray on, labor on, forasmuch as your work shall not be in vain in the Lord. The believing fathers, mothers, children, friends, whose bodies sleep in the earth, rest under the watchful eye of Jesus, and, as he flashed down from Paradise and put on again the form that lay cold and lifeless in yonder tomb, so, out of Paradise, at the sound of the last trump, these and yourself shall rise incorruptible and immortal. Only believe, and this great resurrection will be to you the assurance of your own.

## XXVI.

## THE RESURRECTION—THE DIRECT PROOF FROM THE NARRATIVES.

*“ This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses.”—Acts ii: 32.*

THE resurrection of Jesus Christ is an historical fact, to be proved at first, like any other historical fact—like the death of Cæsar, or the conquests of Alexander. It has also its spiritual aspects and confirmations, which, to the Christian, are full of power. But the primary proof rests on historical evidence. Peter, in speaking to the Jews, within a few weeks after the event occurred, appealed to living testimony on this subject. This testimony is recorded for us in the written life of Christ. We must first judge of the fact according to this testimony. We need not here suppose their inspiration, but simply regard them as unimpeached and unimpeachable witnesses of what their eyes saw and their ears heard, and their direct communication with him fully assured them of. How their subsequent life evinced their faith, we may dwell upon hereafter. We shall dwell to-night upon the direct testimony they bear to the fact that Christ rose from the dead. Preliminary to this discussion, I shall say something respecting the fact that Christ was actually dead. In proof of this we have the following chain of

evidence : 1st, Previous to the crucifixion, Jesus had spent the night partly in conversation with his disciples, in anticipation of death, partly in the fearful agony of the garden, then in arrest and the preliminary examination at the house of Annas. The trial before the Sanhedrim commenced early in the morning ; he was then tried before Pilate, then before Herod ; then before Pilate, where he was scourged and condemned. After all this exhausting process, without food, without support of any kind, the cross was laid upon him, which, through his great weakness, he was unable to bear, without help, all the way to Calvary. 2d, He was then crucified before the third division of time, or near the commencement of the sixth hour, or twelve o'clock. He hung on the cross, with the malefactors, until near sun-down, or more than six hours. 3d, At about the ninth hour, or shortly after, it is expressly said, he gave up the ghost, or died. 4th, After a time, the soldiers were commanded to finish the execution, so that they might remove the bodies from the cross. In doing this, they broke the legs of the others, but on coming to the body of Christ, found that he was already dead. Then, to make assurance doubly sure, one of them thrust a spear into his side, and out of the terrible wound thus inflicted there flowed blood and water. 5th, The fact was then officially announced by the centurion to Pilate, that he was dead, and then, and not till then, his body was taken down, and laid in the sepulcher. 6th, It remained there, in a closed and sealed tomb, under a guard, until the morning of the third day. 7th, He then came forth, vigorous and strong, not at all like one suffering under great weakness and pain. 8th, The Jews, and all those concerned

in this transaction, never doubted that he was dead, but spread the report that his disciples had stolen, from under the eyes of the guard, his dead body. These facts are so conclusive and strong that critics, and the mass of even skeptics, have given their assent to the reality of his death. The great fact, then, before us is his *resurrection*. And, here, the first point I make is, the *character* of the witnesses. Are they men of a just and truthful character? Were they able to know the facts to which they testify? All works on evidence insist on these things as affecting the credibility of witnesses. Now, we are to remember that those who put the facts on record represent the testimony of all the apostles. They all affirm and act upon the belief of the same things. Jesus chose these men, early in his ministry, to be the witnesses of his life. They were with him to its close. They stand forth as men without a stain. They lived and labored for no personal aims. They sacrificed home and reputation and life in consequence of their advocacy of these great facts. There were none of the elements of fanaticism or ambition about them. Not a particle of malignancy or worldly ambition is exhibited in their lives. They everywhere inculcate truth, and love, and patience, and every human excellence. They are bright lights, radiant with the nobler and holier elements of humanity. They were familiar with all they state. They knew that which they affirm. At first, in their anticipations of a visible kingdom, they would not believe that Christ would die. But they were compelled to believe the fact when it transpired. They did not believe that he would rise again; they even doubted the first report of it; they yielded at

last to the direct, positive, visible fact, and, when thus convinced, they believed fully. Then it was they became witnesses of what their eyes had seen and their hands had handled; and assured of its truth, as a living confirmation of the divine gospel, they devoted themselves, without fee or reward, to the proclamation of this truth among the nations. Whatever might be their intellectual attainments as tried by human standards, as witnesses to the great facts of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, they hold the highest possible character. Such are the *witnesses* of the resurrection.

Permit me now to say a few words of the character of the proofs given to them of his corporeal resurrection. Luke, in the first chapter of the Acts, says, To whom also he shewed himself alive, after his passion, by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God. Jesus arose from the grave in the same body which was buried there. Whether a change commenced at the time of the resurrection which advanced and was finally consummated at the ascension, fitting it for the heavenly life, or whether such change took place wholly at the ascension, is not material. The assumed fact to which their testimony is given, is that Jesus rose in the body of flesh and blood which lay in the tomb. Of this he gave his disciples ample proofs—such proofs as at once silenced their unbelief, evinced that he was not a mere specter or ghost or spirit, but inspired an assured, an infallible faith in him as their fully risen Lord. What were these proofs? 1. He appears to them, stands with them, and walks with them for hours. 2. He

communes with them, teaches them high and spiritual themes ; directs them what to do when he shall finally leave them. 3. He sits down with them and eats meal after meal with them. 4. He shows them his wounds and permits them to feel of him, to assure them that his body is not an appearance, but solid flesh and bones. Thomas had declared that *he* would not believe, unless he could put his hands upon him and feel his wounds. And the Savior, out of compassion for his fearful spirit, gave him the very test of his resurrection that he required. Now what greater or more certain proof has any man of the existence bodily of his fellow-man than these? Here are all the functions of a living capacity performed in his presence. Here is sight, hearing, eating, and drinking, feeling, walking, sitting—full companionship. Are not these infallible, assuring evidences? What else can you imagine as sufficient proof if these are not? What other proof have you of anybody's corporeal existence beside these? As men, as reasonable men, they did believe, and now they bear their testimony of this great fact to us.

Such is the *character* of the *proofs* to these witnesses of the resurrection. Now let us look at the character of the communications in which they have announced these proofs to us, in order to warrant our faith in the resurrection. I do not mean that they have narrated to us all that occurred during the forty days before the ascension. There is no one period of the life of Christ on earth of which this is true. But they have given to us *specimen* proofs of this great fact, sufficient for our conviction and faith. If we unite the testimony of Luke, as given in his gospel,

with that given in the opening of the Acts, then we have five direct narratives in which the resurrection is wrought out. The indirect testimony is all through the New Testament. Of the direct testimony, I shall omit that of Paul, for the present, and ask your attention to the narratives given by the four evangelists. *First*, then, it will be seen that these narratives were written or published at different times and different places. They were written to meet the wants of different sections of the church, that a true account of the great facts of the gospel might be placed on record and transmitted to the future church, when the living witnesses would be in their graves. These witnesses are independent in their testimony; each narrative is given from the special stand-point of the witnesses, and conforms to his plan. There is not, and from the nature of the case can not be, any agreement among the writers to put forth a well-concocted statement in the same form. One therefore states what another omits; one states facts, in a few sentences, without reference to the specific time or order of their occurrence; while another draws out the same facts more at length, and states more definitely the place and time of their occurrence. The results, four distinct, independent narratives, diverse in manner, in order, in the number of facts and the greater or less fullness. But the great fact which stands out foremost in each narrative, and about which there is not the shadow of a doubt, is the true resurrection of Christ in the same human body which was laid in the grave. It is impossible, therefore, for the mind to frame a testimony that, for all the ages, would be more convincing to all who seek after truth.

2. You will notice that when these narratives are put together there is at first a seeming confusion, and in one or two instances an *apparent* difference amounting to an antagonism. I say apparent, for we shall see it is only apparent and not real. Now this seeming confusion is a strong argument to my mind in favor of the sincerity and truthfulness of these narratives. I reach my conclusion on this point in this way. The event itself must have created great excitement and more or less confusion in the consequent conduct of the disciples. They were sunk in profound despondency. They did not understand and did not believe in his resurrection. The women who first went to the sepulcher were on a formal errand; they had no anticipation of such an occurrence. It breaks upon them, and then upon the others, like a clap of thunder out of a clear sky. It scatters them, as it did the guard, in wild confusion. There is rushing backwards and forwards. The air is full of it. Among the disciples there is begun hope, and doubt, and curiosity, and restlessness, visits to the tomb, incoherent remarks, one asking for or seeking another, rehearsals of what they have heard, flying reports; just such confusion as naturally attends so great an event. Then when Jesus appears personally among them, the interest centers in him at once. They lose sight of the events of the morning, in the deep interest which now waits upon his words and coming movements. Imagine such an event, or any great event, thus suddenly occurring not far from the city, and you will at once dismiss from your mind all idea of order, of method, in the conduct of the excited hearers and witnesses. Such things do not take on themselves the advance

and retreat of a military march. Every one acts on the impulse of the moment, and when you attempt to gather up who was there first, or afterward, or how they acted in visiting the scene, there would seem to be confusion.

Now the narratives of different persons describing the scene would take on the character of the scene itself. One writes from this point, and another from that; one bears one kind of testimony, another a somewhat different; and, putting them together, at first they seem confused, until you institute a thorough examination. This is precisely the fact in respect to these accounts of the evangelists. The terrified guards fleeing; some of them hurrying into the city to tell the chief priests; the company of women, astonished at seeing the stone rolled away; the two angels; the words, He is risen; their fright and flight; Mary Magdalene running back to tell Peter and John; their running to the sepulcher; Mary returning; the appearance of Jesus to Mary, and to the women—all are just like the reality, just what we should expect on such an occasion. The circumstances are reported, now by one, then by another. Each narrator hears one part or another. One makes a deeper impression than another, and thus he writes what is true in itself, yet not all the truth. Thus the natural scene stamps itself upon the narratives, and commends its truthfulness to every thoughtful mind.

3. I now remark that when these narratives are fully canvassed, there arises a substantial agreement. As to the great fact that Christ is risen, all are univocal; there is no obscurity, no confusion in their statements here. But when you come to notice the

subsidiary events, there is, amidst apparent diversity, a real accord. The difficulties are only such as would naturally occur in different writers, each looking at and hearing of the facts from independent points. I do not propose now to present a full harmony of these narratives. I will only allude to two things, which are supposed to be contradictions. The first is the statement of Mark, that Jesus appeared first to Mary Magdalene; while that of Matthew, and the circumstances of the case, would seem to indicate that he appeared to the other women first. Two methods have been adopted to obviate the difficulty. The first is that Jesus, after he had appeared to Mary, did actually present himself to the women on their way to the disciples. But Robinson, who thinks the circumstances of the case not favorable to this supposition, insists that the words of Mark must be taken relatively, and not absolutely. He himself mentions only three appearances of Christ on that day—one to Mary, to the two disciples going to Emmaus, and in the evening to the disciples. Of these three which he mentions, that to Mary was the first, and that to the eleven the last. But he determines nothing as to the other appearances on that day. The other supposed contradiction is in the different messages given to the eleven and the disciples. One of these is that they should go before him to Galilee, where they should see him. The other, that they should tarry in Jerusalem until endued with power from on high. But this latter command was given after they had gone to Galilee, and at the close of his forty days' ministry, and has no relation to the message given to the women.

The more thoroughly you examine these narratives, the more entirely the difficulties in respect to the harmony of the parts disappear; while in respect to the one great fact around which these details are variously grouped, everything is clear, manifest, undoubted. Around a lofty monument, trees and men may stand in different attitudes and relations, and those who describe these surroundings may, according to their point of observation and their design, represent them as they appeared to them, omitting some and mentioning others, isolating or grouping, or omitting, as seemed most consistent with their purpose, but all the time the monument itself is the grand object, and out of these diversities of view in regard to its surroundings, that, as the sublime centre, rises heavenward, and attracts all eyes. Christ is risen, is the wonderful fact these writers and the apostles, and the early Church bear testimony to. This holds its own place in all their thoughts and reasonings, but the circumstances attending it may vary in form or fullness according to the view of each witness. Like a fugue tune, these minor strains of circumstances run into and repeat or separate from each other, but out of the seeming discord comes forth at length the magnificent harmony that fills the world and the ages—Christ is risen; sin is conquered; death is dead.

4. But, leaving the further consideration of this substantial agreement of these witnesses, I ask you to notice the minor scenes, the special accounts of the actions and words of Jesus and his friends at or immediately subsequent to his resurrection. You are all aware that the most persistent efforts have been made at various times to shake the credit of these witnesses.

They were mistaken, they were the victims of their own excited imaginations, the accounts were written long subsequent to the time of the scenes represented, where a mythical form had been given to what was only some ordinary occurrence. They combined to impose this false account upon the world for the true narrative ; these, and such things, have been asserted and argued, and are still asserted, in order to get rid of the transcendant fact, *a risen Christ*. But an examination of the narratives at once puts these pretentious assumptions to flight. The transparent artlessness of the writers, the congruity of each narrative with itself, the conformity of the details in action and spirit with the nature of the case and the characters represented, are such that the supposition of mistake, or imposition, or myth are utterly incredible. That such men should have originated these things out of themselves, or out of any thing but the facts themselves, would make them the most wonderful intellects in the world and lift them into the circle of divine power. To state this argument in full and illustrate it would be to take each of the narratives separately and dwell upon them. A single illustration will sufficiently indicate its nature. The one we take is from the 20th chapter of John. Mary Magdalene, on coming to the sepulcher, finds the stone rolled from it and the body of Christ gone. Without a thought of a resurrection, deeply distressed, she hurries back to tell Peter and John. They at the word instantly set out on a run for the tomb. John outruns him, reaches the sepulcher first, stoops down and looks in, but does not enter. Peter then comes up and boldly enters. Then John, overcoming his natural awe, goes in, and they find the

napkin laid by itself and the linen clothes laid by themselves, all in order. Now you see the touches of nature and character all through this. Mary's anxiety to let Peter and John know the fact; their haste and eagerness; John timid, awe-struck, stooping at the door; Peter bold, rash, at once entering in; John then following; the clothes and napkins folded and each laid apart; was there ever any narrative more artless, more characteristic of the actors, more transparently truthful? The men return, and Mary arrives. There she stands without the sepulcher, weeping, and as she weeps she stoops down and, looking in, sees the two angels, one at the head, the other at the foot of the place where the body had laid. They ask her, "Why weepest thou?" The answer is, "They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him." Then turning round she sees Jesus, but, blinded by her tears, knows not it is him. He asks her, "Why weepest thou? Whom seekest thou?" She entreats him to tell where *he* is laid. Jesus saith, "*Mary!*" Turning herself fully towards him, she breaks forth with a cry of joy, "Rabboni!" and embraces his knees. He says, with beaming kindness, "Touch me not; I live; time enough for this hereafter; go tell the disciples," etc. Now, how artless, how truthful, how true in every word and line to nature, to Mary, to Jesus is all this! To think that these men could invent this, and then go and die for its truth, is one of those absurd hallucinations which fit men for the asylum! What is there in all the history of literature so artless, so tender, so true to character in respect to Mary; so touchingly affectionate and commanding, and true to nature in respect to Christ,

as this scene at the sepulcher? This same character is impressed on all these narratives, and many a man, for a time blinded with unbelief, or doubtful, with Thomas, has, through the argument which they carry right to the soul, with him exclaimed, "My Lord and my God!"

Passing now from these four narratives, we must say a few words before closing of the fifth—the testimony of Paul. This is a distinct testimony, standing by itself and invested with peculiar importance. The witness is himself one not to be despised. He is a man of mark in the history of the world; in the power to influence mind, in the influence he has exerted, in that he is destined still to exert, he stands pre-eminent among the intellects of the world. He is not only *one* of its intellectual kings, he is the greatest of them all. His mind was informed, and quickened, and adorned, and expanded by all the classic culture of ancient Greece, and superadded to this and dominant over this was all the religious training possible under the greatest masters of the law of Moses. A Pharisee in religion, he was a bitter and bloody opposer and persecutor of Jesus Christ. His original, mighty mind and enthusiastic soul were consecrated by religion to the overthrow of the cross. Suddenly he is changed. He becomes a Christian. He lays his heart and intellect at the feet of Christ. He puts all his ripe powers into the investigation and proclamation of the gospel. He is a contemporary of the apostles. He is familiar with them and with the scenes through which they pass. He is personally acquainted with hundreds of the disciples who had seen Christ after his resurrection; he testifies that Jesus in his ascended body had revealed himself to

him. This man, whom no one suspects of weakness, of partiality, of ignorance, of childish superstition, of the incapacity to discriminate between facts and imaginations; this man concentrates in himself and announces to the world the testimony of the apostles and the hundreds of disciples who saw Jesus after his resurrection. With the confidence inspired by the truth, a confidence that made him an apostolic preacher to all the Gentile world, he declares in the 15th chapter of the 1st Corinthians, "How that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day, according to the Scriptures; and that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve; after that he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep; after that he was seen of James, then of all the apostles; and last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time."

Such is the distinct, unequivocal testimony of this prince of apostles and king of men, after years of full study, to the fact of Christ's resurrection from the dead. It agrees fully with the narratives of all the other sacred writers; but it gives, in addition, the special appearance of Jesus to the apostle James; and it also mentions, with a minuteness more than the others, the number of the disciples to whom he manifested himself on the mountain in Galilee. This is one of the incidental corroborations of the truth, of great importance. It will occur to you at once, how much Jesus insists, as stated in the narratives of the evangelists, on the return of his disciples to Galilee, as the place for his fullest and largest manifestation.

In Jerusalem there were but a few of them, and those girt in by hostile Jews. But in Galilee he was a resident from youth; there he lived most of his ministry; there lived the mass of his followers, familiar with his face and form, the witnesses of most of his miracles, multitudes of them healed by his power as to their bodies, and by his word as to their souls. There he will make a full demonstration of himself and his resurrection to them all. He appoints the place. On a lofty elevation he had delivered his sermon on the mount, early in his ministry; there he had chosen his apostles; on such an elevation he had been transfigured; and there, too, he will now see for the last time on earth the body of those who had become his disciples. At the appointed time they move thither from all parts of that country. Silently, but with heightened expectation, they move by families and companies, until more than five hundred are concentrated on the mountain summit. Then he revealed himself; he shows his wounded body; he comes into familiar converse; he gives his final instructions; he gives them all the elements of a true faith in his resurrection; and henceforth, they have *seen*, and heard, and believed.

Permit me now to mention together the various recorded appearances of Christ after his resurrection:

1. To the women returning from the sepulcher.
2. To Mary Magdalene, at the sepulcher.
3. To Peter, during the same day.
4. To the two disciples going to Emmaus, towards evening.
5. To the apostles (excepting Thomas), assembled at evening. These five took place at or near Jerusa-

lem, upon the first day of the week, the same day on which Christ rose.

6. To the apostles (Thomas being present), on the eighth day afterward at Jerusalem.

7. To seven of the apostles on the shore of the Lake of Tiberias.

8. To the eleven apostles and five hundred other brethren, on a mountain in Galilee.

9. To James, probably at Jerusalem.

10. To the eleven, at Jerusalem, immediately before the ascension.

All these infallible proofs of the resurrection men can not away with. In vain they say: The supernatural is impossible. Such an accumulation of living proofs to a lie is equally impossible. We must give up all faith in history, in testimony, if we give up such truth, so attested. You see the results of it at once in its effect upon the disciples. Weeping and mourning, they had spent the day after the crucifixion; now they are raised to the highest heaven of joy and faith. These prejudiced and narrow-minded men swell into intellectual giants; these timid men, scattered at the first blast of the assault in the garden, are moral heroes, braving death and coveting the crown of martyrdom; these cautious, silent men are fired with a sublime enthusiasm and a noble eloquence. In little more than a month, just after the departure of Jesus to heaven, right in the midst of Jerusalem, they are found proclaiming this great truth to the multitude there assembled—Jesus crucified for our sins, and raised up from the grave. Hundreds are there to attest the truth. In the face of scribes and Pharisees and Sadducees, the bitter murderers of Jesus, they publicly charge

home upon them the crucifixion of the Messiah, and declare his resurrection. A strange tremor, a wild excitement spreads through the city. In a day the Christian Church is organized, and numbers its thousands. That testimony to the fact of the resurrection of Jesus they continue to bear, amidst persecutions and trials, unto death. That flashed, in its living power, over the nations, and comes down to us through the faith and zeal and love and hope of generation after generation of the saved. It is one of the great points of redemption. How grandly it stands forth before us a living truth this day! It is the triumph over death that heralds our triumph and consecrates the dust of the Savior's dead to immortality. Who would have the conviction of that triumph, that resurrection, when this corruptible shall put on incorruption and this mortal shall put on immortality, torn from his heart for all the wealth of time? Who, for all the thrones of this world, would be willing to settle down in despair, and write on the tombstone of those dear to him that sad epitaph, "Vale, vale, pro eternitate vale," which an unbeliever once inscribed over the grave of his child. He died for our sins, he rose again for our justification—this is the truth that thrills, exalts, and, as it is received in the heart, saves humanity. No; when we die, put over our dust the anchor and the crown; the anchor that holds us fast in hope of the resurrection of that body, the crown that symbolizes the crown of righteousness we expect to wear in the incorruptible body in the world of light.

























